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# Quest of happiness

Níl sé ceaduithe an leabhar seo a choimead thar an dáta is déanaí atá luaite thíos.

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THE QUEST OF HAPPINESS

18 NOV 1939

OPUSCULA BY JOHN MACKAY.

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PORCELAIN.

THE MEANINGS OF SOCIALISM.

THE TEN ISLANDS.

KILRINKA.

CAPTIVITY.

THE LETTERS OF DUBLINENSIS.

TRODDEN GOLD.

FORESTRY IN IRELAND.

A FOREST TRILOGY.







*The Lake of the Birchen Trees.*

82419 MACK  
427573

# THE QUEST OF HAPPINESS

By  
JOHN MACKAY

*"Never demand of knowledge anything except that it should  
be valueless."*

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT.



THE TALBOT PRESS LIMITED  
Dublin & Cork



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## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to my Wife*

**"K. C. M."**

*avian and field naturalist,*

*to our tramps by hill and dale, by mountain and mere, to all our joyous days together. Friendship is claimed to be the only pearl of price that we collect from the waters of this life. And if a man's friends include his wife, then he has collected a pearl beyond price.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the preparation of this book for publication I wish to express the sense of how much I owe to the Marquis of Merry-Thoughts; to Don Lugubrious, "The Silent Rider in the Wood," for his epigrams and for bare feudal strength of his sometime severe if valuable criticism; to Professor de Binchy and all those others—men of strong heart and sure brain—who have helped in making this work, in the language of Cambrensis, "one of such charm that men can never weary nor have enough of its perfection."

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## MANIFEST

Some three hundred years ago it was said "the field of knowledge had been so often traced, that it was hard to spring any truth which was new." I agree. But if truth may receive addition, a speculation profound as the figurations of the divine numbers—three, five and seven—his labor est. You will say perhaps that this labour employs only a peacock's art of self-display! But outside captivity (as many opinion) the peacock is the shyest of birds. Suppose, however, that I were to confess the impeachment, may an extenuation not be urged? Where is the man who does not seek a berth on that ancient galley Happiness? Very well then. The purpose of this labour is to provide a fresh oil—wherein life is still so rich—for the lantern on the poop of that galley.

# The Quest of Happiness

## THE ART OF DINING

"Can you desire too much of a good thing?"

—*As you like it.*

AS dinner closes the perfect day, so in order that I may be consistent in inconsistency I open my pages by fluttering a bannerol to its art.

First then, however excellent a thing brevity may be, brevity and art do not make fast comrades. Is there not some saying about the difficulty of fitting so great a thing as art into the shortness of time? And of all arts, fine or dependent—art carrying beauty into the sphere of utility—does it need repetition to impress that dining is the least conducive to brevity?

Now my next opening point is that whatever a man sets out to preach, he should not only acquire facility in its rhetoric but believe in what he preaches. Were it my privilege to write of the soul, I would strive by my asceticism and humility to endear the wonder of it to all men. So in writing of the body, whatever contributes to its delight and happiness—calisthenics, music, sculpture, the sublime and beautiful in Nature—finds in me a zealot.

In this spirit then I approach the greatest of all the subjects with which the body is concerned, the

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subject of food ; of the fuel, liquid and solid, upon which its superb organism—with its myriad of tissues, veins, nerves, arteries—depends for the valiant exercise of the functions, both mental and physical, for which it was designed.

So in the very beginning I would recall an episode from the life of that artist, M. Henri Charpentier—the lyric poet of food, that sultan of the kitchen before whom kings and queens, the Empress Eugenie, Edward VII, Sarah Bernhardt, did homage—because it embodies the spirit of this writing.

It was one day during the “great war,” at the time that renowned soldier of France, Joffre, was in the United States pleading the cause of his country, when word was sent to M. Henri that the Marshal would be out next day to lunch at his already famous restaurant.

“A lobster Henri was one of the things I fed that day to the man who had saved France at the Marne. I spoke to that lobster when I placed him, alive, in cold water—had he been plunged into hot water, he would have died with every muscle taut and tough—‘My big fellow,’ I said, ‘you are to go to sleep, relaxed and peaceful, so that your meat will be tender when you blend your being with that of a hero.’ Parsley, a few grains of white pepper, bay leaves, a carrot, an onion spicy with cloves and some salt, joined that lobster. Afterwards, when he came from the bath in which he had boiled, he received many delicate touches. Finally, as he reposed in the pan, there was added a lump of butter the size of one’s thumb, and when it had melted a cup of double cream.



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When this began to bubble I poured in a glass of sherry, which gave its flavour and its bouquet to the sauce before I removed the pan from the fire. I thought, after he had eaten that lobster, Papa Joffre would embrace Henri. Afterwards he had *crêpes Suzette*, until little scallops began to appear in his tunic from the stretching between one gold button and another."

Please, this episode is not presented as gourmet's ecstasy, but as a picture of how food should be revered, food inducing exolution of the senses. To obtain this reward from food, the first lesson to be learned is abstemiousness. What would you say of the host who served caviare in half-pint gollops? Even the fellowship of dreams—those visions of such fairness from far-away land—is sacrificed by gross feeding. I merely suggest that it does not require water-lilies out of season, Napoleonic china, or a menu from the chateau of Rambouillet, to establish discrimination. So when serving fruit, for a host to gild the stems of apples partakes dangerously of the circus parade, or, coming nearer home, of a 'Sweep' promenade. Food should be used as wine is drunk, and only the uncouth drink wine to quench the thirst. Harken to the voice of Ecclesiastes: "My son, hear me and despise me not. A very little sufficeth for a man well nourished. He fetcheth not his wind short in bed."

Abstemiousness then should distinguish all that appertains to food and its service. A little choice silver, a vase of flowers, and some cut glass, will lend distinction to a dinner of chops and floury potatoes,

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with or without a generous salad. I mention salad because of the importance to health of pastineous food. True we cannot provide our guests with the finest of all condiments, hunger. "With a clear and naked appetite," says the great Carlovingian physician, "every meal is a feast. You will find the tongues of Nightingales in a dish of onions." Personally I have stowed stump-ground corn made on water inside my hatches and called it a festival. But if hunger is not in our gift, reticence is, and reticence is equerry to hunger. A guest should never be exposed to the danger of a count-out, either before the conclusion of the meal or on the day following.

The secret history of civilised man is largely one of his dinner tables—be the meal breakfast, luncheon, dinner or supper. They have been the occasion of more deceit than any other human device. They have shaped when they have not decided the issues of peace and those of war. They have determined the life of governments, the fate of kings, the destiny of peoples. They have made more traitors than saint-seducing gold. The Borgias put them to still baser use. In Scotland the MacDonalds were undone at the banquet which their own unsuspecting hospitality had provided. Has it ever occurred to you, studying the faces in the daily press, how often the personal linen of its diners should be black, not white? No crime has been too lurid, no intrigue too sultry, no treachery too cautelous, no fiction too bold, no easy road ever planned to a worthless goal, that a dinner has not sponsored it. And what of the degradation of a great art by the empty venal? Hell does not

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provide punishment sufficiently acute for the rascality of banqueting in the midst of poverty. In sooth if Roman-Hellenistic civilisation ever be overthrown, it will be the multiplicity of the public banquetings of its mediocrities that will have achieved its disaster.

But when has art not suffered debasement? Let us rather regard in this as in other things the admirable side. Do the appropriate persons desire to celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of a learned society, the conclusion of a congress, the success of a great limited company, the ceremonial of dining is the crowning event. What puts the whipcord into the blacksmith's arm? What makes the birds sing? What gives its beauty, elegance and fragrance to the rose?

If I were a rajah ruling absolutely over my kingdom, neither trade union secretary, strike-master, nor poverty would raise a head within its frontiers. I would bring to the surface the best that was within all my subjects. Taking for my text the Persian proverb, "Hospitality is the expression of Divine worship," my mind would not be directed to seeing that justice reigned. Justice is obvious. Wisdom lies, as the ancients tried to teach us, in the perception of great principles. A bishop dining his chapter does not kindle the imagination. My people would know where I dwelt, and I would command their fealty because my table would not be differently set. I would rule through that instrument whose prerogative none questions. My Minister of the Interior would deserve his title, for under my eye he would teach a new art, the art of kitchen-planning. The kitchen

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would be the tabernacle of my kingdom, the most spacious room, the most colourful in the houses of my people. So would the fame spread of my dominion.

The English raised Mercury, the god of business, to the position of tutelary deity of their kitchens. I would place them under the protection of Jupiter Caelestis. I would establish the most famous university that had ever been built, one whose concern was the whole human body. Chairs would be endowed appropriate to every aspect of hygiene and the culinary art. I would have statues of the world's greatest chefs erected at the entrance to my palace. Every woman in my kingdom would be apple-squire to a gentleman, for the learned rightly claim that the Graces are maids-of-honour to good food. Thus I need not command, for I would have freely given to me, the loyalty of my subjects for the common weal.

Dining is the one festival dedicated to man's yearning after beauty, at which the separate essences of his soul and body become for a brief interval dissolved one in the other. Let a man's equator be distended, and observe how his countenance irradiates the smile of a Buddha. Valorous food is a divine gift. Who taught the negro, before he became civilised, to eat the hearts of lions? Why, in time of war, is the best food reserved for the soldier? Nor is brave food any longer a privilege of the rich. I have eaten a meal in the kitchen of a French paysanne, not one hundred miles from Crécy—bouillon, mushrooms from the neighbouring chestnut woods, and roast guinea fowl with potatoes *soufflés*—a meal that would have

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honoured a nobleman could he have prepared and put it on the table.

Some criticisms of the food served by innkeepers in Ireland are deserved. In the homes of the people, however, it is different. I will tell my story this way. A boy may lack discrimination, he may have a cast-iron digestion, but he enjoys reactions that no ragout or *vol-au-vent* of sophistication will reproduce. I can renew the savouriness, the snowflakiness of every home-dish over which I licked my chops as a boy. Perhaps I was fortunate, though it might easily have been otherwise, for my folks, inconspicuous but admirable, had been swept time and again by typhoons like the failure of Sadleir's Bank. Yet if fortunate, it was only the sort of quiet fortune that tens of thousands of Irish families inherit.

It is in ancient, not modern Ireland, however, that I would interest you. It is said there has been more academic nonsense-writing about Ireland than any other country in the world. Perhaps so. I am no hand at repeating gossip. But to a boy, and as a boy I best remember it, there is a side to its story that cuts up warm, and there were no animals called "deans" in it. What I mean is that its being, and well-being, were sunlit; a world of praying knights and warrior bishops, of Fenian Odysseys and Red Branch Iliads; a saga of battle-music and minstrelsy, of fair women and craftsmen skilled as were the Sidonians. And no chapter between its covers is of more absorbing interest than that which tells of the tables of its princes—the high ceremonial of the Trumpet Blasts, the procession of the bards and



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shield-bearers, the disposition of the tables so that every guest faced the entire company, the white-robed line of slaves bearing aloft their flambeaux, each rigid as if carved out of the panelled yew behind him. Food and its service in ancient Ireland were subjects of punctilious ritual. Did not the tremendous battle of Moyrath (637 A.D.) originate in the violation of the law of precedence—according to ancestral rank and personal renown—for the fair holding of the banquet? And (a distinction I have never heard was elsewhere accorded) the chef in a royal household held rank with the highest Minister of State. Why not? Not to honour the chef is to omit the general from the battle, its director from the orchestra.

To-day we dress ourselves in white shirts—as if the possession of a shirt were a personal distinction—to become the containers of a menu, a single item on which our combined skill could not put on the board. Our minds narrowed to the dungeons of our petty ratings we seat ourselves with the air of Sir Valentines, and from ‘grace’ to ‘thanks,’ collectively or individually, the thought never once breaks upon us, what supreme devotion to duty must have sustained the exalted artist in his preparation of food for men without the first understanding even of its primitives.

There is a painting worthy of contrast, a famous piece—*La santé du chef*, by Francois Brunery—a picture of patricians, of half a dozen Italian cardinals in their glowing robes, caught during a brief diurnal relaxation from high office. The proportions of the salon, its aloofness, the position of the board to one



*Panel from "La santé du chef."*



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side, the snowy cloth cobwebbed with lace, the paintings, the flowers, the fruit, the gold, the sparkling glass, the variously noble countenances of these princes of the church gifted to unbend like the simplest, the obeisance it all conveys of great minds to great art, it is a piece that hangs in the memory. The moment chosen by the artist is when the chef, a white figure, stands within the door, body inclined in acknowledgment of the homage being paid him—in the name of all—by one of the august Trimalchians ; a sovereign, the greater for his modesty, accepting that fealty which, in its rendition and acceptance, only the distinguished are initiate.

Coming to more intimate grip with our subject, to number, conversation, wines, we invade the territory of convention. We must not cry out against convention. Without it the world were a rat-hole. And in dining, there is erudition even in the vessels, both above and below stairs, used in its rite.

Number gives rise to many considerations. To seat more than fourteen, the "fourteener" or sonnet number, is to approach the fearsome territory of the banquet which the wise and illustrious treat when they can with a letter of regret. The most nearly successful dining number lies between six and ten. The lesser makes for greater cosiness. Opinions of both persons and personages can afford to be less restrained. With six the personal reminiscence may be ventured.

A political or motived dinner will sometimes be confined to four. Eight, if all are well known to each other, make a perfect number. Believe me, eight is

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one of the cheerful experiences of this world. With either ten or twelve the responsibility of host and hostess deepens. Guests must be more carefully matched. The importance of good listeners is accentuated. The danger of bores cannot now be disregarded. The pages of Simon Wagstaff might in this connection usefully be consulted, for as he explains, "One lady can give an answer better than ask a question; one gentleman is happy at reply, another excels in rejoinder; one can revive a languishing conversation by a sudden surprising sentence, another is more dexterous at seconding." With ten or more it is essential that one guest should be of the perennial genus, that too-frequently undervalued race whose profession is folly, who not merely keep the ball moving on the carom, but keep what is equally valuable, a smile hovering near the eyes, a convincing tale ever waiting the appropriate occasion to be slipped off the lattice of the tongue.

And passing from number, coming to conversation, dare I presume to speak on that art which is the complement of all arts, how to gain influence effortlessly over the serious side of others' minds? One sometimes hears of two men having a business conversation. That is a declension of the word unknown to the books. Conversation implies culture. Please do not misunderstand my use of this word. With the coming of the Arnoldians it underwent vicissitudes.

I am a schismatic among the Arnoldians. My good humour goes to pieces in the presence of men—mostly the products of slog—who would establish a



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corner for themselves in the apples of the Hesperides. In the opinion of these merchants of erudition, to have read Euripides, Tasso, Lucian, Molière, otherwise than in the vernacular, stamps you brummagen. Find yourself inadvertently in their company, and you may exhaust your charm, you may trip as opportunity arises through the origins of Ethiopian Christianity, the pigmentation of the impressionists, the ceramics of that period of the Ming dynasty when its yellows glowed with the sunshine of eternity—do you believe that you would create an impression? You do not impress men *propositi tenaces*. Life cannot be imparted to dead bones. I push them aside as I would push to a drawer. Culture is not education, not breeding, not pre-eminence in any vocational calling. In part it is intuition, enabling us to see at once what is best, and never allowing anything else to influence us. It is an amalgam of education and fine temperament from which the meretricious has been driven off by simple grace of manners.

Want of intimacy with outdoor life places one at a disadvantage with some types of diners. But perhaps, of all who consume one's sufferance, the supreme owl-stuffers are those whose talk is attached to some one "piece-of-eight," motors, stymies, duck-shooting, dry-flies, the strong ale of the stables. When I speak here of conversation, I mean that unpremeditated interchange of thought which grows on the cultivated sunny slopes of life; talk pleasantly flexible concerning the tan-faced children of this earth, the world of nature, the triumphs of science, even a venture within the mystic temple of the



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philosophers, for I do not agree with Master Carlyle, that, when we leave the great highways of gossip and politics, no sooner do we open our mouths "than something warns us the divine gates are closing." I am not suggesting that one should ambition to be high chief of a thousand conversational spears. Captains of legions, whether of words or men, do not make the merriest company.

The subject of precedence I prefer to avoid. I do not mean such problems as whether bishops' sons step in before or after barons. But those other more personal difficulties that have no solution, whether the hostess should allow the prettiest women to sit at either side of her husband, or call on him to discharge his duty by the heavier battle cruisers. The roots of some perplexities are never exposed. Even the shape the dinner table should assume can occasion uncertainty. There is demure grace in the oval table though the oblong is possibly more canonical. The variety of oblong known as "gate" has slenderness and often great beauty of wood to recommend it, but its legs and the legs of your guests are too liable to come into collision. Besides, what particular beauty would a horse possess if he had sixteen legs? Possibly, if the room lend itself, the round table is best adapted for six. I recall every sparkling eye that for a week in high summer lighted one such table in the bay of a high mullioned window. But I do not like so well the round tables of a hot-doggery.

So by way of number, table talk and tables, we arrive at the ordered procession of dinner wines, for, as in the ritual of meats, salt foods come first and

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afterwards food more sequestered, so with the wines that accompany them. Convention here is master. You do not open champagne at lunch. I am a mere catechumen in wines, but "to drink claret with the chocolate *soufflé*," says M. Andre Simon, "not only looks wrong, it is wrong. What the people sitting at the next table may think of you, what the waiters who bow to you as you leave the room will think of you, you will never know, and it is better that you should never know. But this is of very little importance compared to the distress caused to these friends of yours from childhood, your stomach, liver and kidneys."

I wonder if it were of any use to urge the captains-general of teetotalism—if they could achieve it—to exercise more modesty; to remind them that alcohol is the stabler form of sunshine, wine the eldest form of alcohol.

What prompts a man to forswear ale? Because he lacks the mellowness of distinguished breeding? Because it opens an easy avenue to publicity, the vestibule of preferment? Because he possesses a swollen liver? Because, a frenetic, he cannot trust himself not to drink pottle deep? I do not suggest that all enemies of wine have mean souls. But if I am unorthodox when these men parade their water wagon, I am unorthodox in the company of that immense figure of the heroic centuries of the Christian Church, the Greek bishop Sidonius; in the society of Philip Augustus of France, patron of the seven liberal arts of the freeborn.

Wine was blessed by Ecclesiasticus. It was the

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subject of the first miracle of the Christian faith. The decline of the great epoch of Islam dates from its renunciation of wine. "The juice of the grape," says Sir Walter Scott, "is given to him that will use it wisely, as that which cheers the heart of man after toil, refreshes him in sickness, comforts him in the ill-haps of life. He who so enjoyeth it may thank God for his wine-cup, as for his daily bread." Even that severe canonist, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, in his apostrophe to the sun, acclaims it "the grape-ennobling sun."

Wine satisfies man's deepest instincts for self-preservation. "The dipsomaniac and the abstainer are not only both mistaken," said Chesterton, "but they both make the same mistake. They both regard wine as a drug and not a drink." And hearken to that fine gentleman and grand seigneur of the grape, the late Professor George Saintsbury: "There is no money, among that which I have spent since I began to earn my living, which gave me better value in return than the money I have expended on wine. Wine has pleased my senses, cheered my spirits, improved my moral and intellectual powers, besides enabling me to confer the same benefits on other people." Religion can make a few men god-like. Wine makes men human.

What do these Teetotal Sanctionists mean by their exaltations? Nor do I accept Boswell's attitude of *dubius non improbus*. Temperance is one of the great nobilities of life. Teetotalism is its negation. Its washy catch-words carried to their logical conclusion all but wrecked society on the north American

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continent. Wine is the child of a cold but fruitful mother, the Earth, and of an ardent father, the Sun. A dinner without wine is one withered at its birth. There is no fruit that the earth bears more gracious in its bearing than the grapes of the vine. Is the vineyard not one of the constant figures of the gospel? Ancient or modern world, until the appearance of these Guildensterns, man had dedicated the peaks of Parnassus to its blood. But the heat of my devotion—these joyous if husky strictures must not be misunderstood in this country of the apostleship of Father Mathew. That apostleship, the historic awakening of a nation from one of the brutalising reactions to which a savagely-ruthless age had condemned it—an event as singular as it was epic—belongs to itself and exists apart.

To be admitted to the intimacy of a great wine grower, to be accompanied by him down the nave and through the transepts, side-chapels and ambulatories of his shadowy cathedral; to wander for half a day amid legions of casks and bottles, scarcely daring to speak lest a vibration disturb the wine in its slumber; to taste a glass of his blameless Fonseca, to partake with him part of a jeroboam of Roussillon—sun-drenched from the Pyrénées—or drain with him a stein of that sherry which they call in Cork “A Winter’s Tale,” that is to share in an experience where darkness may surround the eyes, but not the imagination. “Descending into the earth,” writes one of the choragi of letters, “we now entered a vast receptacle of spirituous riches, thousands of bottles silently awaiting their time to kindle the perception

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of thought, to sharpen the wit, to open the soul, to awaken the trembling tongue."

True, some of this imprisoned light might be dissipated on the rich, but let us forget them. In these soundless avenues you are in the arcanum of all the philosophers; hock a century old, high-priest of meditation; hermitage, wedded-spouse of serenity; the song of birds in this sparkling Moselle; the love of woman in that Tokay; the music of the spheres in this Grave. "Ripe age," said Trowbridge, "gives tone to good fellows, violins, and wine." What depth of pity does not the man excite—if there be any such—who would artificially warm a beverage wine; to whom the sacred symbols 50-59 are mere numerals. Nothing, it has been said, lasts in Ireland from the money in the men's pockets down to the weather—except virtue, vigour, and hospitality. And through hospitality wine diffuses sacred rapture.

I found in Meath's fair principality,  
Virtue, vigour, and hospitality.

Hospitality, Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, the four cardinal virtues!

My sorrow! for the association of hospitality with modern civilisation. Where has gone that line of the discriminatingly-distinguished rich whose glory it was to make their homes the Wineland of the illustrious? Then secluded wealth was possessed of a mission worth while, the privilege to see that vulgar cares were left to the vulgar. Now a Titian is condemned to paint for his daily bread the features of every saucer-eyed strutting parvenu before the Verities. A



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Racine has to earn the one reward with a jester or pence-farthing tenor over the ether. A Liszt is thrown a fiddler's invitation by some manufacturer of cigarettes, dog-collars, matches, or *papier de toilette*. The immortal, for the equivalent of a night's or week's lodging, exposed to exploitation by men—I do not care any longer if I am guilty of . . . but perhaps better dismiss them.

Finally grace. Are we as recollect in the matter of grace as our ancestors? Having opened this monograph with reflections on brevity, suppose I conclude on the same note. The shortest grace of which I ever heard, happened once at a cricket dinner in the north of England. Amongst those present on the occasion was a cricketing parson. Asked to give the blessing, he rose to his feet and said "Play," and the feast ended, pronounced the thanksgiving, "Over"; telegraphic, perhaps the deeniest bit profane, but at the end of a perfect day, gratitude quaintly turned to the Giver of all perfection. Praise to God Who giveth meat, convenient unto all who eat; praise for tea and buttered toast, Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

## THE ROSE

"She is a woman, therefore must be woo'd  
She is Lavinia, therefore must be loved."

—*Titus Andronicus, act ii, sc. i.*

DEAR Lady,

If I possessed for the rose the affection of Josephine Beauharnais, if my knowledge of it rivalled that of the renowned abbot of Cirencester, and the gift were mine to express that knowledge and affection with the gallantry of Albertus Magnus, still would my writing fall short of what your devotion to its regality represents for me. I take notice of your view that the rose has been neglected in literature. Rose books there have been, or we would be faced with a miracle more miraculous than the rose itself. But some rose books, like that of the Spanish physician Monardes, are no more than a black cherry laid at the feet of Ceres ; others, such as the monograph of the Rev. Milliar, might more correctly be described as grammars of cultivation ; while some, like the famous book of Dean Hole, are one loud joyous deray rather than literature, the full-blooded outpourings of zealotists, designed to turn people like me, if not into Fifth Monarchy men among Rosarians, at least into worthy Triers and Expecters.

Graciously do not regard me as summary, if I set down what a forthright history of the rose must be. It will be in ten volumes. The first volume will begin

## THE ROSE

at the beginning, commencing with those roses which 'blew' over the four rivers of paradise, most likely Mosses or Centifolias, my wife says. Thence by easy stages this volume will come downwards until it reaches the roses of our great-grandparents, the Damask, with its armament of prickles; the Gallica, mother of the famous red apothecary; and the for ever unforgettable Provence, aristocrat among the cabbages.

The second volume will be confined to symbolism. It will tell how, at the first meeting of Deirdre with Naisi, the daughter of the high-poet, gathering a wild rose in the glade of the forest, gave it to her beloved. And how, returning to Levarcam, "Hast thou gathered *the* flower?" Levarcam asked. "I have," the maid answered, "and death and life to me now are one, dear foster-mother."

This, one of the greatest of the ten volumes, will contain the most unexpected information. It will recall how the son of Sirach likened wisdom to a rose plant. It will quote that passage from the Vicar of Weston-Favell: "The horse never stands to inhale the fragrance of the rose, nor does the ox turn aside to gaze on its pomp. Senses they have to discern flowers in the gross, but no taste to distinguish their finer accomplishments." It will tell how prior to the Crucifixion all roses were white. It will set down with all its Eastern embellishments the love of the nightingale for the rose, recorded by the poets. It will give the full account of how the white rose came to symbolise silence. It will relate that episode from the history of the emperor Saladin after he had

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defeated the Crusaders, when—though the decision rent him—he decreed that the great mosque of Omar be razed to the ground. It is so human, this tale, it fills the memory ; how, yielding at last to the supplications of his people, the great sultan relented. I cannot support the Muhammadan view of the Christian faith, but the story has to be told as it is handed down. The Crusaders had converted the mosque into a Christian cathedral. How was this stain upon the sacred edifice to be blotted out ? Finally, as the chronicler relates, in response to a vision, the emperor ordered that there should be brought from Damascus eleven hundred camel loads of roses, and that the bales should be opened within the great mosque so that every interstice might be cleansed and purified.

The third and fourth volumes will deal with the scientific evolution of the rose of our twentieth century. One must be saturated in the history of this flower to realise—as you realise, Madonna—the privileges we enjoy. At the same time, while exultation in our expanded knowledge is legitimate, proportion has to be kept. During the unsettled centuries following the fall of imperial Rome, none may tell how much of the rose learning of the east—which Rome had centred within herself—perished. These volumes then, while dating our ampler age from that rose of Malmaison whose velvet we still stroke, will bear testimony to humility.

Strangely, in England, the land of the emblem of the rose, it was not until 1876 that its first Rose Society came into existence. But thenceforward, as

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has so often happened, woof ! These two volumes will tax not only the learning but the vision of the Council of Authors ; for what is the present but a passage to that future which holds still dark, " Paul's Scarlet Climber " with amethyst centre, *your* black-and-gold " Papa Gontier," and I know not what other treasures around which, now you frown, now smile, in the land of dreams. Even I, with my tiny smattering of knowledge, understand the difficulties. But when has difficulty not been the fulcrum of triumph ? However baffling some of them—rust, damage from vibration, the rapid voltage-drop when rose-life is subjected to sun acceleration, the leakage of perfume, the vascular prostration following atmospheric fumes—however immense the problems, no Companion of the Rose doubts the issue. How could they ? Does not the rose grower, with a facility never known to the magician, to-day command originality in form, foliage, fragrance ? Can he not say to this or that plant, " Let five palms be added to thy stature ? " Has not the hidden secret been laid bare—I hope I set down my statements correctly—how to increase the petals by decreasing the stamens ? Though rigidly scientific, these two volumes will be absorbing. Separate chapters will be devoted to the various allies and enemies of the rose in cultivation.

In the fifth volume the rose in relation to religion and art will be considered. Statistics will be furnished of the almost incredible thousands of persons engaged in rose cultivation. An account will be given of famous rose patrons, how upon a single festival,



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Nero—for the young emperor did not become black in one night—expended the equivalent of £50,000 of our money on the purchase of roses. It is easy to indicate what the presentation of the rose from this one angle might embody, but the mind stands back at the task involved. Appropriately this volume will salute the great rose growers of the world, the pioneers of that lodge, I quote Dean Hole, “whose first master wore an apron of leaves.” The Dean I expect belonged to the ancient Society upon which he drew for his engaging simile.

The sixth volume will distinguish between the three families of rose-growers—the professionals, the amateurs with head and under-gardeners, and the amateurs who grow their own roses, the true Rosarians. It will embody a dissertation on rose nomenclature. It will deal with the degeneration which has made some rose catalogues read like a garden-party of warlocks and wuricoes. It will point to French rose titles, by contrast so singularly felicitous, “Friendship, Amour, La France, La Precieuse, Virginity, L’Imperatrice, Tenderness.”

The seventh volume will crown its authors with chaplets of roses. It will be devoted to the rose in literature. It will contain every prose and poetical allusion in every age and all languages. This volume in parts may demand fortitude in the reading, but its glorious quotations will run into thousands. It will tell how the rose decorated the terrace of Pliny’s garden at Clusium. There will be a chapter dedicated to the attic feasts of Karl Magnus, those banquets graced by the lusty Alcuin, the knightly Hruodland, the

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polished Anglebert, the astute Paul the Deacon, those romantically historical *coenae* when the royal tables were strewn, the wine-flasks mantled, the guests crowned with roses.

The eighth and ninth volumes will contain the plates. There will be sumptuous baskets of celebrated roses painted by masters of still life ; plates reproducing every great picture in which the rose has been featured ; entomological and other scientific engravings illustrating the life history of the enemies of the rose.

The tenth volume will be devoted to the indices, appendices, bibliography and geological notes, for though the earth be stepmother to those plants we incorporate in her soil, even a stepmother will be won over to the side of her compulsory children—when they deserve it. Up to a point a man may nurse any soil with the assistance of some skill, endurance and a wheelbarrow. But are there not other and deeper secrets ? “ I was always striving to get the best varieties of roses to work from,” Burbanks tells us. “ From the seeds selected I first raised and brought to maturity some 80,000 seedlings. From this entire lot the ones I considered worth naming were four in number.” But if we cannot all be Burbanks, still am I not repeating your considered view, that every true rose-lover should grow some at least of his roses from seed ?

England has enjoyed a unique privilege in having for her national emblem the rose, which indeed, if we exclude Boadicea, has received emphasis from the quintessential number—that number in which nature

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so delights—of her regnant queens, conforming to the five “Brethren of the Rose,” Matilda, a French moss (a rose between thorns); Elizabeth, a sport from the red and white, without perfume but with roots firmly laced; Mary, the “golden rose” of the Pope; Anne, the rose of convention; Victoria, a symmetrical tea with tendency to quarter possibly, but rich in somnolence.

In Syria the rose is regarded as the emblem of immortality. In Persia there is a certain charmed day on which this flower is believed to have a heart of gold. In that exquisite and progressively emotional office, the Litany of the Virgin—Tower of Ivory, House of Gold, Ark of the Covenant, Gate of Heaven, Morning Star—the Church reaches the pinnacle of lyric beauty in the salutation, “Mystical Rose”! borrowed by her from this fairest flower.

In the high office of government there must be secrets of State, but I am not so sure that the *tournure* of the past has been preserved. When a pro-consul of Rome entered into secret compact with the ruler of one of her self-governing dominions, he did not bind him to a crude observance of silence. Instead, he was ceremoniously presented with the emblem of fidelity.

And the motto of the rose! Is it a fancy that it gave to the Black Prince his device, “I serve”? And what service! Architecture, to crown the triumph of its greatest pieces, has drawn on it for its rose window. Algology has romanticised itself by naming from it the fairest frond of the sea, the rose-tangle. In England, one of the most beautiful coins

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ever struck from its mint was the Rose noble. The old herbalists united the two sweetest things, honey and roses, in those emulsions upon which time has not improved. And the wedding of the Rose ! Well, God may have inspired greater roundelays. But perhaps it is more prudent for one like me to couch myself all quiet, when the subject of music comes up.

I spoke of that charmed day in Persia when the Rose has a heart of gold. Surely the true rose-grower has such a heart perpetually. Does he not belong to the one faculty with those " Brothers Minor of Wizardry," the bees ; those magicians (chemists were a feeble word) who can distil from herb and flower—without impairing their structure or diminishing their fragrance—the most delicious of all earthly foods ?

As the centuries advance—albeit the hooded crows who devour Society—all that is noblest in this world, including the rose, advances from perfection to perfection. Nature chose to deliver to us the first day only one of her handicrafts wholly perfect. Dear Lady, look in thy mirror for its name.

## THE ROMAN CHURCH

"I have a good eye, uncle; I can see a church by daylight."  
—Beatrice. *Much ado about Nothing. Act ii, sc. i.*

GOOD cataloguers are like a silent gear-shift on your new eight-cylinder knee-action car. They give smooth gateway down the highways of literature.

I had been searching for a catalogue—if possible that sort of catalogue which the French call *raisonné*—of the literature of the Roman Church, when it occurred to me that perhaps such a task was beyond the competence of a parliament of enumerators. The mere books written in denunciation of Rome, and how it kiln-dried the gospel, would girdle the equator.

And nowhere can the end of Romanism have been predicted with the same quiet sense of the inevitable as in Ireland. The year 1827 seems to have been a year of exceptional confidence. At Cavan, so early as the 28th January in that year, Lord Farnham in the chair, its immediate dissolution was foretold. "The alarm bell has been sounded," it was announced. "Rome has come at last into collision with that stone which God laid for the foundation of Zion, upon which if a man fall he shall be broken, and which if it fall on him"—an unusual occurrence for a foundation stone—"it shall grind him to powder."



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But the Roman Church is a tough customer. Like Sir Geraint, that brave knight of Arthur's court, the column of its throat is knotted above its massive breast. And do not misunderstand this comparison. Because I contrast this serene custodian of the "Girdle of Truth" to the noble Geraint, you would be making a mistake were you to set it down as belonging to his period. It did belong there. It has belonged to each age in turn. To-day, in keeping with this electrical era, the whole structure has been invisibly wired.

I think it necessary to tell you here that I had gone out on this quest, because of one of those experiences that seem continuously to befall me. It is a curious thing, but as the years tot up into the forties and beyond, the religion we wear, whatever its denomination, becomes so easy-fitting and comfortable, that when it is passed under cold critical eyes we, in Ireland at any rate, are just stumped. Thus on a recent occasion when I should have been in a position to heave the Fathers at my opponent—an American as it happened—I was canonically dumb.

Travelling between Wexford and Dublin, my train had been joined at Rathdrum station by a Mr. Octavius Birdthistle—from Iowa he informed me—a whole six feet of radiated energy, the features square-cut like those on a coin, with something in them of that elusive resemblance to the buck Indian noticeable in so many northern American countenances. It seemed he had sent his autocar back to the city, and was trying what it was like to ride-out on one of our "buck-board" railroads. I think he regarded my

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discovery in the carriage as a piece of luck, for he opened at once into conversation.

Mentioning the scenery around Rathdrum, the latest thing on his mind, I admitted that I knew Glendalough.

"Category thirst-quencher," he commented epigrammatically. "But why term it a lake, friend, and hector your peace of mind? According to the Homer-Jones standard, I reckon if it qualifies for a pond it is good showing."

"I suppose it's a matter of custom," I said civilly. "It was a loch or lake, when the inhabitants of America were painted vermilion, yellow, black and white. So we just keep on calling it that way."

His face assumed a gravity which his tongue belied. "The trouble with you Europeans," he said, "is that America gives you a feeling of age, a sense of shrinkage. But what's really wrong with you in this island is, not that you barely escaped being on the map, not so much your dimensional specifications, as that your business, political, and theological, ratings are arthritic."

"Arthritic," I went over the word. "I am afraid I do not know what it means," I said.

"Arthron, joint," he said. "The joints of your social order are inflamed."

I have been tremendously puzzled whether to set down here the fulgurations—the lightnings—of this gentleman. You see so few people are interested in politics. An engineer by instinct and training, it seemed as if he could never rest until he had penetrated the working of every new mechanism that

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he saw. Thus when he landed in Ireland, he had put his head down into the vitals of our democratic machine.

“ This island,” he said, “ is suffering from prostration of its fertility. Its currency is cankered. It has elephantiasis of the tariffs. Its budgets are swollen. What is the first thing, may I ask you, that a doctor looks at when a man wants the once-over? Is it not his patient’s mouth? What this island wants, sir, is the dental chair. It wants to have its politicians out. No nation is better than its politicians.”

“ Yet the people seem pleased.”

“ The people are powerless, my friend. Democracy is staged here as we stage a wrestling tournament back home. The only hunch left the people is to pay the gate-money, listen to the harangues, and back their fancy. The whole thing is a game of professionals. It gives a crick in the mind to an honest man, your democracy. To a cynic it might be all more fun than a barrel of monkeys, but I am not a cynic. Crop-average, trade-volume, marriage-content, the polite arts, you hold the world’s bantam record.”

My first reaction was one of sympathy with myself, I, whose occupation was serenity, I felt trapped. “ You establish your case,” I said colourlessly, “ if vehemence be its crown and base.”

“ By the Lord of the Sky ! ” he exclaimed, “ but you talk childish. Your economy, sir, is rotten as last year’s leaves. Yet a short horse is soon curried. The problems of your country are soft shell nuts. You can choose either of my metaphors, and which-

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ever you choose your problems are as readily curable, when you close your 'open mind' and get down to action."

The man was not plumped inside with the sweet kernel of the hazel. "You certainly don't keep your opinions hull-down on the horizon," I ventured.

"Why should I?" He pulled himself up into an erect sitting posture by the luxuriously upholstered strap beside him. "The truth may be unpalatable to you, but your whole social order is built upon graft. Your one natural resource, your soil, is honeycombed with graft. You should have a golden ox erected above the architrave of your Department of Agriculture. Like the Babylonians, you have descended to the lowest zoolatry, and, before an end was made of that people, as no doubt you remember, the rosy faces of them became like the bulls they worshipped. This island is the only country in the History of Man that has successfully halved its population! Your very side lines, friend, tourism and sweepstakes, what are they but new angles of the old sport called something for nothing? Is your Tourism a street sign, or do you call it peradventure? You don't imagine I came over here to sample your peeps of scenery or Grecian architecture? If I need to make a study of Grecian art I go to Greece. The tourist propaganda that you put across is gold-brick stuff, see. You have natural resources that await development with vision, and a native stock that still reacts to the precepts of Tobias. These assets, sir, are your foothold. They are the measure of that continence and charm which is the keynote of your island story. No nation should come

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into this world to be a lake-shore resort either for trippers or the left-overs—sporting or nondescript—of humanity. You have become population poor, friend.”

“ I am not sure that we want to become population rich,” I said, “ like America.”

The retort had no effect. I might as well have observed silence. You could not wind him. “ By Herbert Hoover ! ” he replied, “ whether Wall Street sells short, long, or crooked, you can’t continue to raise families here, and instead of providing for them, doll yourselves up with high-sounding patronymics, trousers-stretchers and autocars. You can’t continue indefinitely to plant your progeny that way on the neighbours. Whatever is wrong with America, we don’t emigrate our children. You want a State cartoonist, sir, incapable of dismissal except for neglect of duty. Democracies fall into the clown-class where the cartoon languishes.”

“ Your opinions,” I said, “ are certainly not those of the distinguished Americans who pass through here.”

“ You mean the Limelight Brotherhood? No, that fraternity, any more than the international Fraternity of Geneva, doesn’t cast a spell on me. And mention of that Daughter of all the Confusions, did it ever occur to you how appropriately it was planted on the lake *Leman*—a mistress, not a lawful wife? What your country can have expected to collect from the green baize table of that select gathering of Boss Tweeds and hungry pirates, beats me. Your own affairs are surely ugly-looking



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enough to provide a whole-time job, with your farming community providing the comic element, and refusing to play any more and grow food. What do you think is going to happen your State, ten, twelve years hence, an island, where the only prosperous persons to be seen, except graziers, are non-producers? "

" I suppose," I said, " it will stick out like a sore thumb," for anger at last was beginning to sting my cheek. The man was a northerner, of course, for if there be any other country where the line of demarcation between the two main streams of its people is so definite, I do not know it. This man represented everything that the aristocrat of the Southern United States was not. Yet there was good in his face, only success was erasing it.

Jaded, wishful to put nine waves between myself and any more of his polemics: " You regard the natural beauties of the island then," I said, " as being on the trivial side? "

"Side-stepping. You side-step the issue, friend. But if you are satisfied with your institutions it's jake with me. Your scenery, what there is of it, is pleasant. It falls easily into its appropriate focus. But like your Christianity, your scenery is unreal. The frame of it has glitter if a trifle recoco."

It was the limit.

" We have a saying in this country," I confronted him. " The fiddle in the centre of a wedding. The clown in the centre of a circus. An uninformed man in the centre of his own conceit."

It bordered on rudeness, but at the moment it had

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this merit—it set back this *arbiter universi* whilst the train sped by half a score of telegraph poles.

“ Did I tread on a religious corn? ” he inquired genially, smiling, much to my surprise, a very pleasant smile.

I said with simple dignity that I believed in the infallibility of the Pope.

“ You don’t look it,” he replied disconcertingly. And with that he pelted me with questions to which I found it difficult to frame answers. He was “ not judging my church on the hoof,” he announced, “ but how about its anointing feudalism? What was feudalism but a high-ball camp of mail-clad free-booters? The ceorl was branded by those Christians with a mark the same as cattle. A soil-tiller might marry only when the labour position on the manor of his lord had need of his brood. Nor did the guilds of the Middle Ages do much, either for the husbandman or unskilled worker. If the hind on the land, or elsewhere, did not jump to his job with sufficient alacrity he tasted the twelve-thonged lash—one thong for each of the apostles. Feudalism wrested a tithe of the very grains that the widow garnered from the stubble. And if you murmured at your lot, you got the grace of a hurdle at the horse’s tail, and the benison of the hangman when the ride was over. The law of feudalism, sir, is a trifle difficult to fit in with the Christian millennium.”

“ You seem to have given the subject unusual attention,” I said.

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“Not unusual. An employer of labour, I strive to fulfil my responsibilities.”

“I concede,” I said, “that, individually, the beauty of holiness often rests on refined environment, on a steady flow of dividends into the family corbana, little oases of the genteelly-charitable pious in a desert of human privation. But I am not concerned with the individual. The Roman Church”—I made as valiant an effort as I could—“does not need me as an apologist. Yet I have still to learn that she has been guilty of the higher stupidity, of interfering in affairs outside her mission. She accepted feudalism, softening its asperities, as she accepted every changing civil order which, in principle, did not violate the moral law. She herself rules without force, a remarkable sovereignty. Visit at evening one of her churches in the city whither we are speeding, softly flood-lighted, and you will see men and women for ever passing reverently in and out, multitudes, often the poorest of the poor, effortlessly moved as the red corpuscles are moved in the bloodstream, impressive from any viewpoint.”

I might not perhaps be gripping the involutions of his mind, but I seemed to be stimulating his relish in this different perspective. It is something to lead a man to the *Pericardium*, even if you cannot bring him into the temple of truth. “I am afraid I am halting,” I held on circumspectly. “We are not good at religious argument in this country. We are like Dean Inge’s churchwarden I think, a worthy man who loved his religion, but who also wanted to live as long and as joyfully as he could in this world.

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The subject of death coming up, when asked where he thought he would go when he died, 'I suppose,' said he, 'I shall go to everlasting bliss. But I would prefer you did not talk about such disagreeable subjects.' You see," I said, "we take religion in this island very much as a real musician takes music. It is an integral part of our existence, a thing now to be laid aside while we get on with the day's chores, now to be worshipped, now to be tossed in the air and played with, as the people played with it in the Middle Ages in their old Miracles and Mysteries, which the church in her wisdom made her own of. Possibly, though a venerable chestnut, you never heard of the old lady coming off the pilgrimage at Dublin, who declared the contents of a bottle in her reticule to be Lourdes water. 'But, Madam,' said the Customs Officer, as he removed the cork, 'this is whiskey.' Do you suppose that we question either the virtue or faith of that old disciple because her reaction was to throw up her arms ecstatically: 'Glory be to God, officer,' she said, 'a miracle!' But in graver mood I would make one point. Everywhere in this world are good and bad bacilli. When or where has Christianity not proved itself the good bacillus, working nature magic against those maggot's bred in the brain of a civilisation that has substituted for philosophy, finance; for industry, industrialism; for the Vulgate, vulgarity; for Christ, his tool-box?"

It was the best I could do and, a sceptic, I still believe that I sent a tail-wind after him.

"I am more than very glad to have met you," he now replied; "argument, if a man can keep his

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temper, is as good for the liver as horse-exercise. Nor can I allow you to get me wrong. I admire your church. I have a cinch on magnitude when successful. Rome may have got a few nasty knocks. A gentleman of your reading lives off the best rations life has to offer, and knows these things. But, grant she has, what great business undertaking has there ever been, that did not come up against inefficient administrators, against cycles of panic and depression? I am free to confess that the Board of Directors of the Church of Rome excites my admiration. It has made the system it controls as nearly hog-tight and bull-strong as an organisation can be."

If self-expression be a part of genius, this gentleman might have qualified for Quality-class one. "You are a living example," I said, "of faith gone wrong."

"My faith, sir! you afford me an example yourself how to use the tongue. And the tongue belongs to that line of merchandise I came over to this island to sample. Contra, I am your creditor for making you use those brains of yours. You may not believe it, but I recognise the importance of religion to society. I believe all religions are good."

"*Tu credis quod Deus non dixit.*"

"Which translated from the Irish means——?"

"That all distilleries do not produce the same quality of whiskey."

It had been extremely difficult to place the man. At first I thought by the whole appearance of him, He must surely be what is called a Rotarian.



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We had reached Rathnew, where the tinkers live,  
Before I had come to any conclusion.

Definitely he did not regard life as a spiritual experience.  
He inclined rather to the viewpoint of Judas Iscariot.  
Even then there was nothing I could do about it.

When you come across an Exhibitionist or climber,  
You are as helpless as if confronted with a political  
significance.

It was only now, when he spoke of my attainments,  
That I recognised he had moved in good society.

I allowed a mellowness to come into my voice.  
“ You command men,” I said. “ You are travelled,  
though the word to-day has lost significance. As a  
man of position and the world then, you appreciate  
that pressed duck or a mayonnaise of salmon from  
the hands of, say Frederick, at the Tour d’Argent  
in Paris, and the same materials served up by your  
landlady at Heavy-Water-on-Sea, do not give  
identical interior results.”

“ That’s it,” he said. “ Religion has you by the  
heels. You’ve got to ride on the religious engine in  
this island, or else? ”

“ Wrong again.” I felt I had him this time.  
“ You reverse the true order. It is we who have *it*  
by the heels. Has it never occurred to you, since  
you have brought up religion, that we in this island  
are the only people who own a religion, as another  
man owns a country estate? Of course, such an  
estate costs a deal of money to keep up. It requires  
land-stewards, wood-rangers, gardeners, gate-  
keepers, a whole hierarchy of trained men. But it  
is a mighty pleasant thing to own if you think it  
over.”

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He had a few more back-handers to deliver, chiefly against our shop-keepers. If he had his way—to use his own phrase—he would “knock the compound hell” out of our whole retail and wholesale sales-organisation. It may be, lacking gall—the most tolerant race in Christendom—that except as evangelisers outside our homeland we will never achieve distinction. This gentleman had yawped over the roof of my country. He had even attacked emigration—without which we were undone—denouncing it as an exantlation of truth that there must be always some emigration. “Ireland,” he had scornfully flung at me, “is possibly the most felicitous country in the world to live in . . . for that proportion of individuals who have succeeded in making for themselves a willow-pattern land out of it. For the rest, what is it? I’ll tell you what it is, Fremiet’s statue in the Luxembourg, a devourer of its youth! the harpy in that statue, tearing at the flesh of the young man while he bends over her lips. It is not a pleasant picture for your bourgeoisie.”

The trigger-swiftness of his attack had burst like a rocket in my head. True, persons of my limitless unimportance should be more dense. And still, the lame sister of the cobbler—even the blind wife of the umbrella-mender—could tell when they were hit. This man had pommelled everything in which I believed. Yet here I was now, while the echo of his words was in my ears, holding such familiar converse with him, that before we parted at Harcourt Street, and he had presented me with his card, we might have passed for a pair of army comrades.

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One unexpected outcome of our meeting, however, was my resolve to make myself up on theological statistics. You see the whole of us, Catholic and Protestant, while ashore, have the recipes of our religion all right. But where is the ordinary man of sense who wants to cook sole à la Colbert, when he can have it served up to him on a plate without more trouble? Travelling abroad however, or meeting a stranger like this, I saw at once the value of these statistics.

Nor would I have you miss this further point. Outside its capital, civilisation strays around this island with something of the charm of a sailor's jig in it. You will find it in the folk music, the conventions, the speech of an unusual people. Once when in hospital in Dublin—for religion with us has not escaped this charm—the room I occupied looked out on a church that was let into the street. Sitting in the window as I convalesced, I had not much to do except look across at it. Sometimes the man in charge would come out in his shirt-sleeves, take a good look up and down, then disappear until next day. One day I asked the young nurse, a country girl, who took the gospel from Rome, what church was that opposite. Now in Ireland we have the distinction of having four primates, two Catholic and two Protestant. These primates are divided in this way. Each church has one in Dublin, the Primate of Ireland (representing perhaps the *forma substantialis*), and one in Armagh, the Primate of All Ireland (representing perhaps the *materia prima*).

Well, when I asked this young nurse what church

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was this across the street, intending to elicit from her the name by which it was known, St. Ethelburga, St. Thomas, or whatever it might be.

"The Church of Ireland," she answered me off the reel.

"And what do you call the Roman Church then?" said I, thinking to puzzle her.

"The Church of All Ireland," said she like that. And there—in this Gilbertian land, where pastoralism becomes agriculture (according to my American acquaintance); whose ambassadors are appointed to a king who is forbidden the country; where Protestant Harvest Thanksgivings are offered for Catholic crops; whose *National* Bank operates from headquarters in London; where we have deliciously inscribed in our "Constitution" the Church of the Protestants as the Church of Ireland, because ninety-two per cent. of the people are Catholics—there you have the essence of the whole insouciance with which a man's theological and other beliefs, or uncertainties, which are as much his own affair as the shape of his nose, are regarded by us, and which the English people are beginning at last to get to the bottom of, if it matters to us what they get to the bottom of; or to them to get to the bottom of anything about us.

Yes, I admit Belfast is different. In Belfast they put religion into politics, just as a man puts a tot of Seltzer water into his whiskey. It is a mixture, as made in the north of Ireland, that has produced effects which are outside the territory of the essay. But living once on the edge of Belfast Lough,

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between Carrckfergus and Kilroot—Kilroot of Swift and Varina—the only Catholic in the townland, July that year came warm and the 12th was a broiling day. As the band from Kilroot went slowly past my gate, I had a commanding view of it. Orange celebrations are not a novelty to me. I was partly reared on them, though my mother's people, being strict Presbyterians—while giving their unalterable allegiance to England—heartily disapproved them.

The band had just finished "Dolly's Brae" and was starting the "Boyne Water." I do not believe that one of these boys had ever seen that pleasant water, but the tune, whatever anybody says to the contrary, has a marching lilt. These youngsters at any rate could draw sparks out of it. The flutes shrilled. The drums shivered in their skins. Talk of the pleasure of killing five fat bucks, or of this business of catching fish in the lakes of Ireland that we have been hearing about now for years in the daily press! As the flutists went by they lay to their whistles while the sweat streamed down the cheeks of the drummers. As I looked at these rapt faces, I became doubtful—for I am continually vibrated that way—if the southern easy way of going-on were really the better one. "Who will ever tell me again," said I, "that happiness does not belong to simplicity?" The exaltation of these lads communicated itself to me. Truth, said I, can never wholly perish from this earth whilst a power exists capable of cleansing man, even temporarily, by the spirit of such bloodless conflict.

Do you think that the Church of the United



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Muggletonians could have thus fired those boys? Not one of them—and of this I am sure—could have told the dates of the foundation of Rome or of its conversion to Christianity, its degree of latitude, the relative significance of its Seven Hills, the name of the river upon whose banks it stands. But they knew what was more important, that it was the bastille of the devil. It is a good span enough now since that sunny July day. The white-robed figure who then governed that bastille was world-famed for the sublime clarity of his conceptions, of immeasurable sanctity, a personage so fragile in frame as to appear almost ethereal. Do not believe that the contrast presented makes these unlettered boys ridiculous. As Socrates told Simmias, the spirit nourished by conviction deep as that by which they were stirred is a vessel purified.

I raise my arm in salute to the near and far-back affairs of the Roman Church. This, however, does not mean that there are not some things through which I would put my pen. Were I, for instance, in a position to influence the Sacred Congregation responsible, I would resolve all *dubia* about the heating of country churches, and—an important point—I would make the cost of heating a non-leviable expense. The Roman Church when she chooses can robe herself in a dalmatic to take the eye out of any religion. She has no need for haberdashery. But prayer and pneumonia are not necessarily bedfellows. And there are some churches, leastways in Ireland, where the black arrows of cold would congeal the wings on an archangel. I remember once congratu-

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lating a parish priest in the West with whom I was staying—the Big Priest of Elphin he was called—what a wholly splendid thing he had done for his congregation by putting in hot pipes into the new church, boasting no Misericords but very dinky, which he had built alongside the parochial house.

The time was evening. Daylight draining out of the sacred edifice, it was englobed in a hushed motionlessness, as if frozen. We had been up near the sanctuary. When we got down to the baptismal font, “Congregation!” he repeated. “I put in these pipes, Cosby, if you want to know, for the preservation of the church; and I am calling you by your mother’s name because I am sure she never tucked you up in bed to say your prayers. There are some people,” said he, and he looked at me with an enormous melancholy, “that will get all the heating arrangements they require when the time comes.” And this, mind you, was directed by him at one who had never stood up winners from his pocket.

A fine preacher—I do not mean that he “opened the throttle” on long reaches of the gospel—I wish that I could do justice to the warm, amiable climate this great soggarth created around him, to the generosity of his cupboard, to his scholarly worth. And when I say that I never stood up winners from his pocket, may I make this avowal. Real joy is seldom baffled when you sit down in the midst of priests to while away a few hours at cards. They flavour the game with wit, often with learning. They play with the zest with which all games should be

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played. And if they do win a few shillings of your money, their delight is the delight of children. He has but a pale-faced knowledge of Ireland who does not know her priests.

The mind of this Church has been compared to that of a boy, accounting perhaps for her solicitude to salvage for him against manhood as much as possible of his boyhood. Thank Heaven there are some who never lose their boyhood, who keep a way of life of their own, not another's. I am not thinking of them. With some diffidence then—*salvo meliori judicio*—I would attempt a contrast of these two "hoods." I am not going to embark on a long rigmarole, but did you ever know of a successful business man who retired at the end of his active career to a skyscraper of his own? His triumphs behind him, he seeks the dimly remembered realm of his boyhood; to remove himself as well as he can from the besmirching soot of his manhood. Why? Because his subconscious primitives reveal him to himself for what he has been, a chaser of dwarfs, hare-lips, hunchbacks, of every device—including "Honesty is the best Policy"—that might accomplish his individual security, and let the Devil take the hindmost; that would circumvent those intent on cutting him down to what they believed to be his size. Can it surprise then, looking in his mirror, he seeks escape from the cunning of eyes that reveal the abyss separating him from his boyhood?

And what an abyss! In the universe of the bright sun the chasm between boy and man is breathless. In the forest a boy hears the husheen, the fragile

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thunder, explosions, puffs, rustlings, cracklings, of the trees growing, noises that to a man are like the silences heard by the deaf. A boy knows where the badger presses his dusky heart against the holt that leans to cover him. The promises of a boy are made on the altar of his heart. The vows of a man are like the morals of a purring cat ; his principles a leech to deaden the sting in him of a caitiff's loyalties. A boy's mind differs from that of a man's as a Red Admiral differs from its caterpillar, for like this Church he reverences what men despise ; he despises most things that men reverence—except money. It is a droll, money ! I do not mean as a boy uses it, but among the noble verities. Yet it is scarcely just to blame the church for grasping it. Without it she might find herself powerless against the forces of evil. " The grace of God," says that charming and candid old priest, Froissart, " is good, and of infinite value to those who can obtain it. But we see few lords nowadays increase their possessions except by force."

In conclusion, I am not suggesting any incursion into the " Einstein realm " of other-time existence in relation to present-time sense. I could not do so because—except it means that the starry scheme of the heavens revolves in each of us—I do not understand what it means. I want you merely to lift your eyes to the swathes of colour that bind the over-archingly tranquil glory of the hills nearest you, be they the Cairngorms or Comeraghs. I would have you do this because external nature belongs as definitely to present-time sense as do our bodies ; and second, because for a moment I want you to concentrate on

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this present time, which is for ever spurring our bodies on the Quest of Happiness.

Concentrate then on this present time, and all the wonder, the joy, the mystery and the happiness, that belong to it. Forget that man is a spiritual being plunged into this incarnation of sense. Forget wholly that unseen entity we call the Soul, so critical of the body, so unresponsive to its reactions, jolly or what-somever. Disregard momentarily the claim of the Roman Apostleship, that like Enoch it walks with God. Forget its association with that inexplicable entity, the soul. Put dogmatic sand out of your thoughts. Treat it as swept up. Regard this vast ecclesiastical corporation only in relation to present-time sense, as the companion in remoteness and nearness of these everlasting hills, teaching with external nature the same mundane creed of order and perfection. Regard this Church, as Hobbes described it, as the ghostly successor of the earth-wisdom of the Roman empire, its roots going back to the beginnings of time. Witness its immense age, its perpetual youth ; its plebeian frankness, its patrician reserve ; its interior restlessness, its exterior calm ; its insight with restraint ; the unity of its multiplicity. Then consider the harvest of that unparalleled combination of paradoxes, the organisation it has evolved in the material sphere—fortitude, truthfulness, modesty, patience, wisdom, charity—for the governance of this present life and its reasoned happiness, and, outside its spiritual claims, you will find its survey raise the concept of man's intellectuality to a sidereal plane.



## THE COLOUR OF SCOTLAND

“ We will draw the curtain and show you the picture.”

—*Twelfth Night.*

**A**LPHA of the Plough tells of a rainy day with wind beating up the valley, of a prospect from his window of leaden skies and sodden fields, how that sort of feeling took possession of him when you cannot get the weariness out of your shoulders, when life seems to have missed the pin-wheel and none is able to give comfort. Then the unexpected happened to him. Rummaging in a drawer he lighted upon a map of the Bernese Oberland, which some years before he had visited. Instantly, as the saying goes, he went over big. His body straightened. His head was held high. He had routed the glooms, for a map he assures us, “ whether of the known or unknown, of the visited or unvisited, of the real or the fanciful ”—study Stevenson’s map of Treasure Island—“ is the magic casement of the poet.” It is a fine story that he tells, how with the aid of this map he renewed every experience of his pathless adventure. Starting before dawn, roped to his guides, you set out with him under the glittering stars over snow and ice, up to those terraces and glacier immensities where men escape for a while into an elysium of reticence. At last, folding his map, he records how he blessed with a tripartite blessing the first Babylonian who had

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invented these plane-projections for the solace of his kind.

Perhaps you, sir, have enjoyed a similar participation. If so you will understand how, under circumstances not greatly dissimilar, I recently set out upon a scientific expedition among the highlands and islands of the kingdom of Scotland, renewing an adventure originally undertaken in company with the Royal Forestry Society of that advanced and hospitable land.

That scientific expedition was an adventure for me into a homeland Cathay. We missed seeing the Black Wood of Rannoch; but, in part this is my meaning. Spruce—a merchant of timber told me—is the future tree of the Scottish hinterland. It was intended he said, to plant at least two million acres of it. He was able to think, however, only in terms of lumber. I left it so. But is it not more than possible that spruce, *espaced* for lumber, grows too rapidly in Scotland? And timber so grown, does it not tend to become ridgy, a devourer of oil, to lose resilience? Conversely spruce, espaced to 4,600 transplants to the acre, can be grown in these islands with a freedom from knots, and to a density of wood-substance to volume, that will yield a fibre for pulp equal to the finest sitka, or as it is sometimes commercially called “silver spruce,” from the Rockies.

What would this mean to the Scottish nation, with a market worth millions of pounds a year knocking at its southern gateway? Consider the orchardist who enjoys a nearby market. He does not sleep on an uneasy pillow. Freights do not worry him. His

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customers are within hail and know the value of his merchandise. He can leave his fruit on his trees, imparting to it aroma and flavour, until the day before marketing. At this point, without doing violence to humility, I want to challenge contradiction that a fiery cross was ever kindled save in a spiritual cause. Here then was the occasion for kindling the greatest "charred-end cross" that ever was, for sending it around the glens, up the straths and across the bens, in the cause of smiling homes and a fragrant countryside, of planting this great land with the thick-set spires of the appropriate conifers.

If you happen to be a highlander, do not be worried lest I be giving myself too much trouble. It does not give me any trouble at all to make these plans. It is, moreover, an occupation which enables one reverently to appreciate how God must have enjoyed Himself when He was creating this universe. Personally I do not expect ever to do more than bring up the rear in heaven. Still, believe it or not, I can call spirits from the vasty deep, and what is more, unlike Hotspur, they come. Sometimes lying on my back, with only my pipe and my *ipse dixit* for company, I have built empires.

So if I were digging my toes afresh into life up in this north country—unless I became a map-maker—I am convinced that I would present the unanswerableness of my case to be ever "sticking in trees" so brilliantly, that, the forests at last lifting themselves, there would be a statue raised to me on the top of Ben More Assynt.

Now pick out the western Caledonian seaboard on

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your map. Look at the south-west of Argyle. Running up through it you will see the Sound of Jura. Up that Sound we sailed the first morning with hearts as light as the clouds that were riding high on the summer breeze. So full were we of the spirit of adventure that Sir Francis Drake himself might have been in the deck-house. At the north of Jura, if you look seawards, you will see the very famous whirlpool of Corryvreckan. Then following on to the head of the Sound on the starboard side, you will come to Arduaine. Perhaps the black rocks on the shore are not shown on your map, but they are there just the same. It was amongst these rocks that the ship's boats pushed in their noses. Was there ever such a morning of spilling sunshine in Scotland? Standing with calm and easy grace upon that rocky shore, waiting to welcome us, were Colonel Bruce Campbell, of Arduaine, and his brother, the Younger of Succoth as he is called, both dressed with their flat, low-sailing bonnets, in what Saint-Fond calls the Ossianic dress of the highlands. Grant it be long before Time, that bald sexton, hath power to touch either of them. The sun glinting from their buckles, a pair of gallant gentlemen, each was resolved that morning it would not be his fault, if we saw any place on our voyage that was not behind Asknish Bay and Arduaine.

The day was a Saturday. Now study the winding road through the hills from Arduaine to Oban. We followed that road to Oban, where we were to rejoin our vessel. Oban itself is a little stay-bright place. On an inner rim of the ocean it would be easy

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to become heroic about this midget western capital of the highlands and islands. But on the morrow we were setting forth down the Sound of Mull for Iona. Look now at Iona. On the map it is not of the circumference of an apple pip, but I would give the breadth of my face of red gold to be going there again in the morning of that morrow down the Sound of Mull.

This expedition was taking us to the crofts of loch Broom, where the people still walk with the Gaelic tongue about them. We were to peep in at the three unforgettable streets of Ullapool, tiered one above the other with houses upon one side only of each street. We were to be conveyed down loch Hourn with its island of the nesting herons, to penetrate loch Fyne, up it was said to the very door of its capital. Is it any wonder that we were without drowsiness? But here this Sabbath morning speeding along the Sound of Mull, with Tobermory and its treasure-ship hidden away in a gulch of it, what were any of these to the place whither our streamlined majestic yacht, white in the sun, was bearing us?

Not excepting Holyrood, Iona is the most sacred spot in Scotland. Assisi, Tiberias, Bethlehem, Iona, these are not names but eyries, the illustriousness of the stars in the air that bathes them. The foot has barely rested on the soil of this islet with its snowy-white sands—sands composed of those small land-shells of the inner and outer Hebrides which the sea has crushed to a powder—when the atmosphere of the place is about you. “The man,” said Dr. Johnson, “is little to be envied whose patriotism



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would not gain force upon the plain of Marathon, or whose piety would not grow warm among the ruins of Iona.”

Fix your eye on the microscopic indentations of it. Every one of these bears an immemorial name, yet on your map the whole island looks no more than a bit of rock sticking up out of the sea. But you would be right in thinking it a piece of rock. It is a rock. And from this rock was struck the spark of a flame, that was to show a light which would be seen beyond the Grampians. On coming ashore my wife and I ascended the hill behind the village, from where we could see the rest of the company, some one hundred and forty of them, as they wended their ways in twos and threes along the ancient paved way which is styled the “ Road of the Dead.” They were bearing for the tiny cathedral to the north, where a new minister was being instituted, so that as it happened the day was one of circumstance. Strangely, as we were to learn, the ship’s company had the road to themselves.

Reluctantly we at last descended from our hill, the Sabbath giving its fitting measure to our steps, our purpose to visit the tombs of the kings and other reverent places on this unchanging ground, where Saint Adamnan was ninth abbot in succession to Colmcille, *Adamnan vitae Columbae*. Opening a gate we pushed into a field with low trees at one side. The grass was short as if kept cut. The chieftains and kings lay in rows towards the west, each fastened down by a stone slab flat with the soil. It was at this point we met the McLean of Iona. Our

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ship anchoring in the Sound, some of us had come ashore in his boat which plied for hire, but we had not been of the number. He proved a Gael to the backbone, by which I mean one who shuns lies, double-breasted in stature, with a burr to his tongue that you could spread with a shovel when he spoke the English. Expressing surprise that he was not at the service, on this of all days, he looked down at me from under his deep brows.

“ You mean there? ” he pointed to the little cathedral on its four square bases. “ We aren’t holy enough to be let in yon, ” he said. He seemed trying, I thought, to puzzle out why we were not at the service ourselves. Then suddenly throwing back his head he intoned two lines from a rousing Gaelic stanza. My wife’s eyes were fixed on him in surprised delight.

“ Has everyone on Iona got the two tongues? ” she asked.

“ No, lady ”—he turned with a gesture of unstudied grace to her, and a smile that would do any woman good spread upwards altering the planes of his face until it embraced every feature—“ we have only one tongue. But when we like we have two languages in it. You see that wee kirk beyond the village ”—he nodded to a structure by the edge of the shingle—“ that’s ours. The free kirk of Scotland. Maybe you would like to know how it came to be out there? ”

“ How? ” she asked innocently.

I am not a bad height myself, but McLean if he was an inch was seven inches taller. He bent down

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his head this time over me, until his chin nearly touched my nose. "I'll tell you," he answered. "Because the Duke of Argyle couldn't shove it any further into the tide. He thought maybe he could weaken us."

And it was then, on an impulse, that I reached out my fist and we shook hands solemnly. "We come from Ireland ourselves," I said, "and go to Mass in a chapel that's built in a quarry. Like the Duke of Argyle, 'twas the only site allowed."

His fingers closed like a vice around my hand. "May the divil stiffen the lot of them," he said simply, leading the way around the tombs of the kings. Then halting, out of the deep register of his voice, "Something told me that the blood in us was one," he boomed.

He looked out to sea a while before speaking again, for he was deeply stirred. "We're simple people in this island, lady," he said, "we have only our own ignorant ways of going on. But we are not footmen of the gospel. That's not the air you breathe in the highlands. We don't hold the Master's wine is in the gift of the grape-pressers. That cathedral may mean a lot to those who believe in it. Why not? Scotland is a free country. It means nothing to us except the room it takes up."

We went into St. Oran's church the three of us and my wife, squire to Nature—who has taught me most anything I know of its secrets—found scurvy grass, with its white cross-shaped blossoms, keeping the little roofless temple in countenance. Then we walked round and round it. How those passing moments

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spring to life out of my map ! May all map-makers find a place among the great choragi. Perhaps the McLean was naturally communicative, but it seemed to me that it was the occasion which now unloosed his tongue, for standing and walking about there that day with him, with the warmth and light of the sun streaming down on our heads, for half an hour he told us things that we wanted to believe were true. He brought the art of his race down to the red minute of the days we inhabit. He desired, too, to know why more men and women from Ireland did not come over to Iona. " It would brighten you up," he explained, " to meet us and reason cases. You would be able to compare your dialects with the pure Gaelic."

It is claimed that on a clear day you can see three hundred islands from the top of Iona. It may be so. We counted a score, the names of which we could tell, and there were others. But it is the place, not what you can see from it, that matters, and there are not many places where a past so removed so easily reconstructs itself. Productivity, rationalisation, stabilisation mean nothing here. The tryst is not the same. Man must live by toil. But the unchanging hills, the powdered stars, the tonant ocean, keep tally of a different world.

When we parted from McLean at last, we sat down on a knoll in a flowery space, and let the centuries roll over us. Away to the south were Oronsay and the Paps of Jura by which Colmcille had sailed after his self-imposed banishment following the battle of Cúl-drainhne. Below us lay the shore where he had intoned the psalms night following night. How many

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keen business men with their "first-class brains" to-day are there, one wonders, who sing the 150 psalms of David every night, rain or hail, under the icy swinging stars? It fills the mind this Iona. There across the narrow Sound, with its swift running tide, was the Ross of Mull, from whence only the post now comes. And here, in front of it, Inish na mBean, the island of women. With sorrow I am against Colmcille about that island. Of course in a worldly sense saints are like ageing spinsters. They know their own minds so well that they become difficult. At any rate Colmcille would allow neither cow nor woman nearer to Iona than Inish na mBean. "Where there is a cow there is a woman," he said, "and where a woman is you needn't search for trouble."

At Staffa, the level sea favouring us, we went ashore. You would not think that this dot could be two miles around its base, but it is of the one circumference with Ailsa Craig. When Saint-Fond visited it in 1799 he found it inhabited by two families numbering altogether sixteen souls, and paying a rent of twelve pounds for what he regarded as a rock. He relates how he saw at once through the error made in 1772 by Sir Joseph Banks, in giving to the basaltic sea cavern of the islet the unmeaning name of Fingal's cave; how the knight had confused the sound of the Gaelic word, meaning "melodious cavern," with MacPherson's Fingal. Returning to the house of his host on the mainland this delightful French traveller, with his mind full of alert burnished things,



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tells how, celebrating their joyous excursion after supper, they drank to

Each of the ladies present; The rest of the guests;  
Scotland; Liberty; Friendship;  
The happiness of mankind in general.

Let us hope that the medium was French wine, not usquebaugh. He does not say whether the ladies joined in the toasts, but he rather implies it.

Next follow with your finger the inner passage of the Hebrides, past Coll, Eigg, Rum, and Muck the Sow's Island, and you will come to loch Alsh.

Loch Alsh, loch Inver, loch Broom, loch Torridon, loch Hourn, fearing I might forget it later, I want to say now that no other thing so pure as those sea lochs of Scotland exists within our civilisation. The wind and rain of winter may torment themselves along this coast, but this June afternoon they had no existence. Sitting on deck, motion in equipoise, the seductive air, the sun-filled hours, the mountains in their endless successions—now vivid catch-crop green, now stern brooding beauty—do you think we were concerned whether party-government was still fluid? The wisdom of Merlyn was ours. This our third day out, all our pretensions suitably recognised, we were at tranquillity with mankind.

Originally our vessel was to have taken the outward passage by the Little Minch, but at the last moment the Captain changed his plans. We were making straight by the Sound of Sleat for the headwaters of loch Duich; then back through the kyles of loch Alsh to loch Broom, where we were due at breakfast hour on the morrow. But the morrow concerned us

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not at all. Morning, afternoon and evening of this Sabbath had made us the drifting complement of this magistral shore, though in June in northern Scotland, evening itself drifts into the following dawn. The stars just twinkle a few moments in the sky and expire.

That was the position around eleven p.m. as we approached the castle of Eilean Donan rising like a monticule at the foot of its gorge, a fairy stronghold amid enchanted mountains. The illustration conveys but little of the romantic scene. This territory is all "holding land," but not in the hunting sense. At the outgates of the Highlands it is steeped in a routh of memories. Just nothing may violate its highland character, a land of the eagle, of ballad-lore, battle-fury, legend; legends cradled in its bosom of love and resolute deeds, of Bruce and the struggle for Scottish Independence, of the sadder age-long feud between the Mackenzies and MacDonalds, of the Stuart cause, sacred relics of history.

Set upon sea-washed rocks with its barrel-romanesque roof (if it be barrel-romanesque), the castle, built originally by Alexander II as a defence against the Norsemen—reduced to a shell by the English Fleet in 1719\*—was superbly restored in 1912 by the late Lieutenant-Colonel Macrae-Gilstrap, father-in-law of Colonel Bruce Campbell of Arduaine. The chieftains of Clan Macrae, known as the "mail-

\* This work of destruction occurred during what is known as the "little Jacobite rebellion"—between the '15 of Sheriffmuir and the more tragic '45—when 300 Spaniards landed at Kintail, accompanied by Irish officers, to support the earl of Seaforth and the Macraes.



*The Fortalice of Eilean Donan.*



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quilt of the Mackenzies," were from 1520 to 1719 hereditary constables of Eilean Donan for the Mackenzies, lords of Kintail (descended from the Geraldine, Colin Fitzgerald, the Irish constable of Alexander III), and afterwards earls of Seaforth, whence the Seaforth Highlanders.

With this fortress authentic and correspondent on our left, we rounded the final bend of land into loch Duich. Then, timed to the fraction of a minute, the sun behind us, we saw—a Miltonic vision—what Captain Livingstone had brought us out to see.

The Five Sisters of Kintail they are called, five broad-based towering pyramids some said of schist, of granite it seemed to me, but granite into which enormous fragments of ferruginous quartz had been absorbed. Partly one behind the other, they rose from the waterfoot at the loch head, surrounded on all sides, in the near and mid-distance, by a forest of grey precipitous peaks. Majestic objects at all times, the Sisters had now gathered into themselves the whole refulgence of the setting sun. The yacht was barely moving. Standing on the glass-panelled quarterdeck you could hear the intake of the breath of the women-watchers, for the vitality of woman is more fundamental. Everywhere around, wrapped in half shadow, the mountains stood in platoons, the inviolate sentinels of the manifestation. The five pyramids were incandescent. Burnt umber was in it, and crimson alazarin, and gold and scarlet-vermilion. Where the light impinged on the quartz the rock blazed with the lustre of gargantuan jewels. Five stratified enormously-impossible tongues of flame,



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they rose, a transfiguration out of the Ramayana. Never again would we see the like. A pin might be heard drop on the quarterdeck, for proud and humble intellect alike the vision had drawn from us within itself every unstained simplicity of pure thought. If I owned the white waves of the sea and they were silver, I would give the whole of them before I would part with the memory.

Next bring your finger north, almost to the southern point of the Mackay country. See the streak of silver at that point—just below loch Inver—penetrating southward into Ross and Cromarty. That is loch Broom, one of the birthplaces of the individuality of Scotland. The tall trees along the north shore are in the demesne of Colonel Fraser. The crofts of loch Broom are upon the sunny southern side. You may not find cucumbers lying back among their vines around these white crofts, but they make milk-rising bread and hot griddle scones inside them, and on this baking day of June it was no mortal sin to envy their owners *everything* that belonged to them, the beauty of their surrounds, the resourcefulness of their lives, the unaffected ease of their manners, their endowment to discourse of real things, their gait as though the earth had been organised for them. There is but one place I know (in the Decies at Ardmore) in correspondence with those crofts of loch Broom. Both anchorages otherwise different, each has the same line of white steadings midway along the rising ground, across the water from you, each croft stretching down to the water's edge, a picture of restfulness.

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Manners make the man, Pope assured us with the infallibility of his name. In parts of the Scottish lowlands, where the people have been brought within the influence of industrialism, there may be cause enough to complain of manners. Yet even there the deterioration seldom penetrates below the skin. Up here, where a Gaelic aristocracy still abides, and the old Gaelic culture still persists, there is an indestructible charm about the people. There is ruggedness—a freedom from servility as well as affectation—but it is the ruggedness of the highland homespuns, a quality imparting to the one as to the other that sense of worth which they communicate, a distinction deriving from a land where every clansman was the equal as well as man-at-arms of his chief.

None the less each return along the Road to the Isles discloses fresh scars. The emigrant ship has taken its toll; the steam-trawler has eliminated the storm-tried line-fisher; the very homespun though hand-woven is no longer so spun. Yet the blood is heated to see how fairly so many highlanders can still ride a career among their hills, how many new unexpected sources of supplementary income have been assimilated. The sea, of course, is always helping. In summer, numbers of the younger men find congenial employment on the pleasure and luxury yachts of Glasgow and thereabouts, vessels not bearing such braw names as the *Gift of God* or the *Houp for Grace*, but paying good money for safe pilotage through these intricate and often treacherous waters.

# THE QUEST OF HAPPINESS

## PART II.

THE days were slipping. Too soon the moment came when we had to turn south from this beloved north-country. Locate Gairloch on your map. It is a little south of loch Broom. It was here at Gairloch I had been expecting to have a top-sergeant experience. The loch ends abruptly in a low encirclement of rock cut by Nature into a trefoil-shaped embayment. To the left of this embayment, embowered in trees, is the little hamlet. And rising behind this sheltered nook is "Flowerdale," with its warrens for rabbits and parks for deer, for long the residence of that staunch Covenanter, the late Sir Kenneth Mackenzie. It was late afternoon when we arrived at Gairloch, another wholly wonderful afternoon. The light had not faded seawards before the high land to the east was silhouetted against a violet dawn. For long after what the clock told us should be midnight, we still paced the deck unable to tear ourselves from the loveliness of the scene. It was from Gairloch on the following day that we were to visit the new forests of loch Maree.

Now I had been led to believe that in the woods of Flowerdale all the owls of Scotland collected annually about June. It arose this way. Back in the summer of 1921 it was at this very Flowerdale that Messrs. Lloyd George and de Valera (in stature oddly assorted) had held parley. I have still the Irish daily paper containing an account—written around that parley—concerning the owls of Gairloch; and there was nothing in that writing, I can

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tell you, either of indolence of mind or dangerous complacency. It had the untiring elastic stride of the thoroughbred.

“To be at Flowerdale once,” it ran, “is to have a memory that will last you. As night falls, to its woodlands come owls from all quarters, there to hoot-hoot for hours dominating the world of men. Under some spell of witchery, veritable spirits of the immortal might have sprung to energy, for nowhere do these fearsome birds foregather in such numbers or with such ghostly effect. Now incarnate tumult, now a still more uneasy silence—a tenseness that follows regularly on these choral flights—its ghostliness terrifies; all the greater if the moon be up and the stars twinkling above the leafy branches. One night a local business man and a bit of a scholar (there is only one business man, the local postmaster, in Gairloch) brought a small party into the grounds, and to a peculiar call—a process of blowing through the hands as through a trumpet—the response was quick, discordant, unearthly. The air seemed to be filled with a thousand demons gone mad with hellish joy. Every listener was transfixed. Away somewhere on high, as they flitted from tree to tree, the ghoulis hosts converted the darkness into a sheer inferno.”

A clever scribe that, even if a naturalist might question his facts. I am not terrified of owls myself. “Do you think I was born in a wood,” said Dean Swift, “to be afraid of owls?” Until I read that report I would have faced a nocturne of them. Then I became not so sure. Yet, from a safe distance, I

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had been promising myself an experience that would uphold my renown as a traveller.

Well, what is the amazing truth? I spoke with several men ashore. They admitted that it was possible an occasional owl might be seen. But they had worked and lived in the place all their lives, and never heard or seen one.

At the close of the war—in those far-off days when a lieutenant-colonel in the Army Medical Corps enjoyed the omnipotence of a Fuehrer—I read in a great London daily an account of the destruction of le Quesnoy (that most mediæval town in all the whole of France), with its cobbled streets, its immense round bastions pierced with meurtrières, its impeding lakes, Beni and Du Pont Rouge, its drawbridge and encircling moat, its vast underground vaulted chambers, all in great part still as perfect as when they left the hands of that captain-of-engineers of the king, the Sieur de Vauban, immortal servitor of his country, whose sluices of 1680 to inundate the low lands around Nieuport and Dixmude—it should be for ever remembered—were actually used to close the French frontier against the German onrush in 1914.

Lying not a bowshot from the historic forest of Mormal, we had entered le Quesnoy on the 6th November, 1918. I was billeted there when the London paper telling of its destruction by the German army reached us. Well, like the owls of Gairloch, someone had blundered. Not a slate had been disturbed on a single roof. The battle for its possession had been fought without the walls. And



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on Sunday, 9th November, the President of France had flown from Paris for such a day of festa as I will not rewitNESS. Well again! who are we in all conscience to judge the strains and stresses to which the Fourth estate is at times subjected? It is so facile to criticise.

It was from Gairloch that our yacht turned her prow westward for crag-encompassed Skye. You may say that it was inevitable I would mention Dr. Johnson in connection with Skye. Of course it was inevitable, though we were landing at Portree in the north, and it was at Armidale in the south that Johnson landed from an open boat. Turn up the index to your Boswell and read what he says for yourself. Instead of the highland reception with pibrochs and flashing claymores which he expected, the great lexicographer found a young chieftain, Sir Alexander MacDonald, educated at Eton, posturing over his hand, the land a grass wilderness, the people abandoned, without seed, haunted by despair. Boswell was for leaving next day, but Johnson decided to weather it out until the Monday, summing up in his famous dictum the whole highland question—the whole Gaelic question for that matter. “Sir,” he said, and in Ireland you can look around and verify his dictum, “the highland chiefs should not be allowed to go further south than Aberdeen. A strong-minded man may be improved by an English education, but in general he is tamed into insignificance.”

It was after eight o'clock in the evening when we steamed into the deep land-locked harbour of Portree.

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On the quay, the day's work over, we were received by a line of citizens and fleet of autocars. The cars were explained by the fact, that we were making the fifty-mile north-western circuit. Our reception was noble. Every self-propelled vehicle for miles around had been pressed into service. The getting ashore, the scramble for seats, the excitement of each departure, I do not think even in the days of the old Ford that Connemara could have matched the encyclopædic character, charm and variety of those autocars or our enthusiasm. Most of the party travelled west against the clock. Our driver took the better way, travelling south to the Coolins. It was on the stroke of half-past ten when we all met at Dunvegan Castle, "the chiefest place in this part of the isle."

To the north-western islander no casket is rich enough to contain the memories associated with this massive pile, set firm and unyielding upon a rock high above the head waters of its own inlet. On the balustraded stone bridge that now spans its moats we were met by the McLeod of McLeod, 27th chieftain of his line, and standing there around him, his silvery leonine head lighted by the rays of the expiring sun—its light winning lustre from the brilliance of his eyes—he gave us (while we were consumed by midges, more army-corps of midges than I had ever before seen gathered together in one place) the true history of the rascally MacDonalds. Now the McLeods were a lot, when they set out on one of their raids, that would consider it a dishonour to turn-in less than a couple of hundred steers and cows. So, as the chief

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explained, in those back-gone times—when not marrying the MacDonalds—the McLeods had been kept busy looting and murdering them. After all, the MacDonalds were only southerners.

At the same time I am no apologist for these McLeods. Clan and septs of them, with their jowls underslung, they had always been a black sight to me. Was it not a McLeod of Assynt who betrayed Montrose? Often I felt, if I had lived back, and had to use my dirk on one of them, I would have put the peg of it into the seventh hole, and given him the whole length of it. Now suddenly I forgot my animosities. The old chief was not wearing his eagle's feathers, but crowned here by his fourscore and odd years—it was whispered he was only a nickel under ninety—with his swinging plaid about his knees, with a thousand years of corbelled history behind him, he filled the title. Do not tell me there is nothing to stir the blood in lineage. To the accomplishments which belonged to rank, there were joined in this proud-looking scion of an ancient race those qualities that spring from an elevated mind, illumined by a graceful plangent humour. Since dead, like the castle over which he held sway, his every heart-beat bespoke his seneschalry.

I think I said there were some one hundred and forty of us. There was not a single bailie, politician or cleric on that number. Still with Scottish factors—dangerous men, whose swords I can tell you, if you fell foul of them, would not be goose feathers—baronets as numerous as deck-chairs and peers of the realm, we were a hefty lot. When our appreciation

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of the manner in which we were received had been conveyed to the chief by Sir J. Milne-Home, he slapped his cane against the ground. "What else could I do?" he looked around at us. "A man must fall back on diplomacy if unable to fight. My pipers live on the other side of the bay. I had no one here to sound the gathering. My personal retainers," he indicated the castle with his cane, "weren't numerous enough to keep you out."

This allusion to the MacCrimmons, the martial and hereditary pipers to the McLeods of Dunvegan, stirred in me an almost forgotten memory. Was it not over at Borreraig, across the loch, that the MacCrimmons kept that school of piping—with its unwritten system of notation just carried in the head—to which for centuries Gaelic pipers came to be trained from all parts of Scotland and Ireland? Now there are no more than a handful of crofts in the wide territory from Dunvegan to Tallisker. The Fairy Flag of the McLeods is furled. Only the ravens feed at "The McLeod's Tables" high above the ocean.

It was on the stroke of twelve o'clock and daylight, with the blackbirds still musical in the trees, by the time we passed Skeaboat on our return to Portree.

Loch Hourn of the whistling plover, with its majestic Caledonian pines clinging to the braes, occupied a whole and wholly delicious day. Part of another was spent in loch Sunart with its indigo reflections, Wilson's "most picturesque piece of salt-water scenery in all Scotland." Two days later, threading the upper reaches of loch Fyne, by break-

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fast hour our anchor dropped from the bow before Inverary, the capital of Argyle, one of the love places of the world. When we took to the boats for shore, so still was the surface of the water that I had to trail my fingers in it and put them to my lips—like David Balfour when he was crossing loch Linnhe—before I could believe it was salt. A man is inclined to lay down his pen before Inverary. Save for a bell-tower, I do not believe that a stone had been shifted in it since I was here twenty-one years before. There it lay, this dazzling city, dozing by the water's edge, its few hundred inhabitants just turning on their pillows as they had done for generations, a society bred to enjoy the gargoyles of the cathedral without, as they enjoyed its dim religious light within, though why religious light should be dim has often puzzled me. In Inverary—a little self-contained community making the most of anything that might be news, putting the time by in the same way to-day as when lawyer Dyce was a part of it—you are immersed in the scented dusk of time.

Scotland is a country of thousands of uninterrupted miles of unbelievable beauty, but its impressiveness though enhanced does not centre around its beauty. Wherein then does it rest? I do not presume to supply the answer, only to suggest. First patriotism. Patriotism will never die, while one part of earth has such power to stir men, dedicating them to resolve that no unworthiness on their part will lessen the glory of a land so lavishly endowed by Providence. Second the singular blending of its contrasts, a land of contrasts so marked yet unified, that the step is



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continuously quickened in pursuit of the secret of these antitheses.

Indisputably cosmopolitan, Scotland still remains a piece out of the Middle Ages, filled as few other parts of the world are filled with a wrinkled symbolism and pageantry. A nation of vibrant thinkers on divinity, politics, economics, there is surrounding and everywhere enveloping it the spirit of Deloraine, Marmion (who was not a Scotsman), Fitzjames, the spirit of a sane unchangeableness. At every turn Arcadian Feudalism and "Red Virtue Limited" jostle each other with square-toed tolerance, in a land where indolence is not one of its deadly sins; where partiotism receives its interpretation as neither an empty nor accretive shibboleth; a land which its people believe has been marked off by Providence from other countries. But they do not boast to you about their beliefs in Scotland. They have not lost the highlander's gift of holding the tongue.

Scotland does more than help to correct the fear that white civilisation is gadereening to its doom. I am not suggesting there is no intellectual hip-wagging. I do not claim for Ireland, or its capital, any monopoly in that art. Nor may I agree with some sturdy staplers from its burghs, that, in a sin-girt world, the divine mission of Scotland is to keep the boilers of salvation stoked. But, possessing the secret of keeping their jovial money and cash in different pockets—no mean achievement—of balancing a pawky criticism with good nature; of irradiating a warmth that envelops the whole of you when you deserve it; there is still something entirely

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bigger about this people, exorcising the miscellaneousness of modern life, something akin to the glowing sound of their speech, a sense of the reality of worth which permanently lifts the spirit, that may not be destroyed until its mountains are levelled.

Inverary I found still dominated by its ducal castle. When they were building the bell-tower, the present duke peeled off his coat and—no trade union raising objection—pushed a wheelbarrow as if he had been fitted into it at fourteen. There are no derricks or railway sidings along the quay of this city. Instead it is laid out in a wide space of green lawn with seats to rest and refresh yourself, a quayside placed amidst beauty that batters you. In Inverary there is leisure to coddle your immortal soul, your intellectuality, your judgment of exquisite correlations.

From this waterside with its arches and old town houses of the Campbell Septs, one broad street short almost as broad ascends in a gentle rise to the church. There it bifurcates to enfold the sacred edifice, reuniting beyond it to pursue its way into the country. When I had walked around the church with its two lofty identical doors, I asked a young girl who was passing, why there was a door at either end. She laid down the basket she was carrying in order to enter into an explanation of the matter more thoroughly. It appeared that inside it was two churches and yet one and indivisible. If you cared to listen to the gospel expounded in the English tongue you had to go around to the southern door. To attend the Gaelic service, you went in appropriately by the north door overlooking the whole beauty of this magic city.

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They do things that way in the highlands without any talk about it either in the Gaelic or Bearla.

If the lids were off your eyes, if you had the imagination to see them walking about it, you would find Inverary peopled with the heroes of Scotland. Inby if ever I alter my domicile I will come here to live, taking my meridian at the Black Boar ; for age goes out of one in this place, with only the penumbra of familiar, eternal things about you, the glades of Duniquaich and Slan Shira, the sun shining overhead (at intervals) and no gales or anything of that sort, at least that a Highlander would fash about.

I folded my atlas and blessed the whole craft and mysterie of map-makers. We saw no crimson forests like those of Mandalay. We had no lion-shooting. We caught no butterflies up to anything like five pounds in weight. But, embarking at Liverpool, for eleven days we paced the decks of adventure. I want to put my views of the matter as clearly as I can. Some people spend their lives lance-in-rest in defence of their social position. People with a whole-time occupation of that sort are in a category to themselves. But outside these, and those others engaged in the pursuit of what men call business, are not seven-eighths of our lives spent around those fish-pools, where we fish so tirelessly for *pantouflierie*—pre-eminence in the throwing of the discus, ambition to write easy hexameters, the desire to charm as conversationalists, or be received as an authority on the evolutions of the jack snipe, bee-culture, old silver, in some microscopic field of knowledge? Well, on this voyage and with a rare success, we had

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all fished in one of these fish-pools, that of a common adventure, among life's best gifts to man.

I once heard an unexpected answer given to that question "Should auld acquaintance be forgot," which at certain times we are so fond of asking one another in song. "Unquestionably," said this man, "and never called to mind." Very few will agree. Some old acquaintanceships may wisely be forgotten. The life has died in them. But are there not other memories, though fragile as a spider's wheel, that are imperishable, that might have come down to us from the stars?

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“ My library was dukedom large enough.”

—*The Tempest. Act i. sc. i.*

I HAVE adopted the title, “ Choosing a Library,” as it stood, though if you fix your mind on it, you will, I think, find that there is something just missed. We speak of choosing a hat, a wife, a suit of clothes, but you do not say of your little friends, Sir Hammond Lane or Sir Westland Row, that they had chosen an over or undersize in noses or chest-measurement. The true library grows with a man.

I was led into this train of thought by the caption of an article in the daily press. The great journal in question had opened its columns to what it termed “ Bright Articles,” recalling those notices that once upon a time tradesmen used to put in their shop windows, “ Bright Boy Wanted Within.” And the writer, entering into the spirit of the conceit, had taken a supply of Brightness out of bond. Here was a man, you said, whose spirits would bubble the same whether he was ascending a volcano or descending in a bathysphere; whether he was expounding the secret opulence of the farming community, or the depression which had overtaken the Rocking-horse industry. For Three Pounds he proposed to launch you on a sea of intellectual felicity. Well, my ambition corresponds. I want to win your appro-



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bation for the library of a thousand volumes that I would assemble, were some noble patron to gift me the essential money, without limit to individual price.

Commencing then with exclusions, first I would ban all books written by women; next those—whatever their discernment or versatility—which played only upon one single minor instrument of percussion. This would affect such titles as :

Recollections of Lamb by Humbert Wolfe.

Box and Cox by the Reverends Ronald and John Knox.

“Jerusalem Homologated or If I were Prime Minister ” by A Berriedale Keith.

Don Quixote, a Bankrupt—Lord Dunsany.

Cardinal Wolsey on the value of Underwear for preserving fame.

The True and Wonderful History of Tom Thumb by Lord Alfred Byrne.

Air Supremacy by the B.B.C.

His Majesty Hailé Selassie on Collective Security.

“Pensionville,” or the Island of the Ten Thousand Golden Umbrellas, by the late Cathleen Ni Houlihan.

What are exiles?—The Right Hon. William Cosgrave.

Lord Chesterfield on the Importance of Social Upholstery.

Third, as the truest purpose of a library is to enlarge vision, I would have to ban all works in the nature of what the learned call *biblia-abiblia*.

Fourth, I would interdict all biographies such as Erskine's “Helen of Troy,” Blaker's “David of Judah,” O Faoláin's “The King of the Beggars,”

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I mean productions that attempt to strip legend to the *buff*. Legends are not woven around nonentities. Contrasts can be invidious. My objection is that these books do not weave. They unravel.

My final exclusion concerns those romances in which the plot turns on the physical differences between men and women. I do not stress the violation of exquisite taste. Neither is it needful to go as far as Sir Thomas Browne; only that sex is a subject for different treatment. In all its revelations—the nesting bird, the ripening wheat, the voyaging seal, the lyrical mating and companionship of man and woman—this marvellous Providence for the perpetuation of life is a matter for philosophic and scientific study, and I do not contemplate to include in my thousand volumes either science or philosophy.

What I am striving amongst other things to establish is, that a library should be a “Herbery” of wise, delicious, wholesome things. It should be like the forest of green and black that a king makes for himself for all seasons, so that when he tires of one he can pass to the other, so that when the green loses for a little while its allure, there is still the black.

I concede the exclusion of woman to be a wrench. But restricted to a thousand volumes I want to be candid. Not Beatrice herself could have disputed the inferior weight avoirdupois of woman’s brain. I mean it is one of those physical facts like the existence of woman herself. Then there is ecclesiastical authority, that the sphere of woman is not in the market place. I do not mean the markets for fruit, poultry, fish, vegetables. Woman is the adornment

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of these places, though strangely you do not hear of feminists wanting to share in that adornment.

Now while I may not go the whole way, I can understand, especially in these days of race suicide, the viewpoint of the early fathers. Indeed it is difficult to quarrel with their robustious logic. They could not have envisaged some of woman's modern "reconstructions." But they saw the affairs of man deeply complicated. Were they to increase that complication? Were they to overstep the designs as well as the modesty of Nature? When a man returned home after the heat and conflict of the day, who was to slip an unobtrusive pillow behind his tired back if not woman? Above all, an august ecumenical assembly, they were unable to discover the ecumenical principle upon which the brain of woman functioned. Familiar instances surround us. Witness the very first of modern feminists, Mary Woolstonecraft Godwin (mother of Shelley's wife), author of the "Vindication of the Rights of Women." There was a woman whose intellect was of the first magnitude, and yet, however deeply her life story stirs our sympathy, I do not think that the most ardent of her disciples could claim her brain worked according to ecumenical or any principle.

Exclusions settled I had now only to distribute my purchasing power over the customary groups. Under romance there would be complete editions—in levant morocco with solid gold edges—of Scott, Trollope, Stevenson, Dickens and Neil Munro, three bonnet lords out of five. Other memorable imaginative creations would include Irving's "Brace-

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bridge Hall " with Randolph Caldecott illustrations ; and necessarily " Gulliver's Travels," a plenary edition. Should you question the presence of this disturbing allegory, I want to tell you that I would not be annoyed. I am seldom annoyed, except by the juxtaposition of the destitute and the eleemosynary opulent. Instead I would take down Tristram Shandy and the history of the Chevalier Desgrieux.

" My friend," I would say, " these are the offerings to us of three clergymen. But they are not here for that reason, but because a library should make the universe its framework. To use the idiom of the society reporter, entering my library and looking around, Brantôme might be observed rubbing shoulders with the Curé of Ars ; Calvin in the unexpected company of Servetus ; Gustavus Adolphus bowing to Wallenstein ; Suvarof sawing the air with his hand as he conversed excitedly with Moltke. You would also find in this section the tales of Nasr-Eddin, that teacher whose jestings with our indestructible crookedness make of the *genus homo* one family. One day caught red-handed by the irate owner of a garden into which he had lowered himself by a ladder, faced with the angry demand to know what brought him there, " I came," said the Nasr, bowing, " to inquire if you would buy a ladder." There you are carried away by the corruption within each of us, by the thievery and wit quick enough to supply the one lie that could successfully bear off the appearance of truth.

And lest it may escape notice, I should perhaps confess at this point that this writing is pure propa-

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ganda, a plea for the *buying* of books. Consider the casualness with which we regard our privileges. In the fifteenth century a thousand volumes constituted a royal library. Now a carver for the royal table may surround himself with the library of a prince. I wish I had the tongue of Nestor, the zeal of Cadmus, the wealth of Croesus, the power of Augustus, that I could launch a crusade for the buying of books. I am not sure that either our state-endowed or municipal lending libraries are all that is claimed for them. In so far as they foster a love of good reading, and are immune from Caesarism, they serve a high purpose. But I would have carved over every such library the counsel of Pixerecourt. "Read, then go and buy books from those who sell them." There is a memorable portrait handed down to us by Augustine of his great Master, Ambrose, hymnologist, doctor, bishop—baptised and bishop by public acclamation within one week. In the midst of every pressure of affairs, with Christianity emerging from the amphitheatre—assailed on one side by a new paganism, on the other by Arianism—we see him first and always through this pen-portrait in the library of his home, "reading in silence." The home libraries of a country, and the home libraries alone, are the index to its civilisation. "Certes," says Sir Richard Bury, "just as we have learned on the authority of Seneca, that leisure without books is death and the sepulture of the living, so contrariwise we conclude that occupation, with books, is the life of man."

Under Exploration—one of my notable sections—I do not include such expeditions as those of Bishop



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Colenso into the Pentateuch (London, 1868, 3 vols.), that tremendous assault upon the statistics of the Exodus which nearly induced a schism in the Church of England. The men I have in mind are Dampier, Da Gama, the North American Jesuits, Magellan pioneer of the Pacific (Guillemard's life of the Navigator), those men who opened for us the water-gates and land-gates of our world. This would be one of my sections which I would cherish as I cherish "The Old Apple Tree," where I would shake hands with eminence. By St. John of Ferula! but you would find here great timber. You would participate in that moment of battle with Oceanic circumstance, when it was reported to Columbus, that a light like a candle had been sighted. You would listen to the account of the Alaskan prospector, Jack Cornell, taken down from his lips by Doctor Hudson, that simple recital of the most valorous expedition ever undertaken by a lone man. Perhaps you do not associate mosquitoes with the Arctic Circle. Listen to Cornell. "The mosquitoes were that thick and venomous, the only chance to sleep was to travel so long and so hard that I fell asleep as soon as I stopped." You would take from its shelf that rendezvous with Death of the greatest of the antarctic explorers, that account of his journey from Elephant Island which leaves behind it a groundswell of emotion.

All the illustrious great sailors under Saturn, to whom civilisation owes what it owes, would be here. You would share in Frobisher's attempts to reach Boffin's Land. You would make the acquaintance

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of ship's-cook and bo'sun's mate Jock Matheson (of Doctor Ommannay's "South Latitude") with his imperturbable "Well, well" in the face of inescapable diaster, the brightness of the planets in his footsteps—"in speech and action slow as time itself and as certain"—for ever plucking safety from amid peril, then going about his indispensable duties as if nothing had happened, quickening in us faith once more in humanity. In every book you would salute large and constructive experience as a comrade. You would stand on the quarter-deck with John Davies—discoverer of the Falkland Islands—when he declared to his starving crew, "I would rather if we must die that it may be in proceeding and not returning." You would endure with Sven Hedin that final day in the salty desert of Khotandaria, when Kassim (last one, man or camel, of those who had formed the great caravan) lay on his back. "We were as if nailed down under the tropical heat. Again I urged Kassim to accompany me, that the river must be near. He signalled to me he could not move. Alone I pulled myself along." Take my word, you would find shelter here from the tempest of the automatisms. You would find hope and solace and pride in the realisation of what men can do and become and endure. You would have to tear yourself away from these companions of the forever-boulevards. Even the dull candle burning in the man who makes private profit the end of moral action, might be fed with a new lucence brought into contact with the Onaway of these paladins. How can one describe them? The stars were their

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dominions. They were shipwrecked and not drowned. Flame surrounded them and they were not consumed. Ice enveloped them and they were not frozen.

When we—with our puddlings among the philosophies—who could not sculpture a bee, who could not distinguish an endogen, who offhand could scarcely tell the port side of a vessel much less enumerate the *fixed* essentials of a ship's lifeboat, when we measure ourselves with these men, the wand of humility touches, and touching ennobles us. Builders of bridges or big business, whatever our methodical profession, law, a lectureship, the leech's art, in our lowlier sphere they quicken us to unself-seekingness, to a more gentle efficiency, which is the wellhead both of individual and community happiness.

My exploration and travel sections would stand on their own dimensions. Under travel, my library would contain only those books for which we may heartily put up our thanks to God; the "Travels of Peter Mundy" (5 vols.); Ausonius, tutor of the young emperor Gratian, his *Mosella*; Richard Baggot, his "Italian Lakes"; Silberand's "Wanderings in the Dutch Bulb country"; Alexander Smyth's "A Summer in Skye"—if a copy were obtainable—Stevenson's "Journey through the Cevennes"; Sir Walter Runciman—who knew the stars as well as he knew the ropes—his "Before the Mast," that odyssean narrative of adventure dared and borne, as the top-gallant sails were borne of his clipper ships. I think I love this book. His were days when, often as not, men were

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rationed "six upon four," when retribution failed to overtake the arrogant; though this farmer's boy at half-a-crown a week, sailor before the mast—shipping magnet and master of statecraft as he was to become—tells of an occasion when a particularly brutal captain having died, one of the crew, stripping himself for greater freedom, beat him until he had to desist from sheer exhaustion. Though the chaff of travel be mountainous, the wheat easily separates itself. Both Doughty and Hakluyt—who was not a traveller—would greet you from these shelves, and Anson of the British navy, and Darwin, and Frank Bullen his Cruise of the Cachelot—in which, unlike "Moby Dick" the whale is not a pretence for its existence—and Philby's "Across Arabia," and Kingsley his "At Last," men who do not leave you on a lee shore; and Conor O'Brien's "From Three Yachts," a pleasant book; and perhaps Froude, his "Bow of Ulysses," though I am fearful of men whose vital organs are multiplication tables. Concerning one book you would have to lend me your aid, Xavier de Maistre—his "Voyage Autour de ma Chambre"—whether to classify it under travel or exploration.

And now my titles finished, I would make my library representative of every attendant art. The pursuit of first editions, *fleurons*, Bewick engravings, early woodcuts, is for the bibliophile; but great literature is a pearl of price, and doth a pearl of price lack perfect skin or fine orient? A book should be not only well written but well printed, so giving hostages to easy reading both ways. Fortunately

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many printing houses are to-day turning out work to challenge names like Whittingham and Pickering. I think great publishers and printers must be masters of wisdom, for only a passion for fine work communicated to all about them could send forth books of the distinction that are constantly coming from the presses. So I would give just consequence to paper, ink, perfectly proportioned margins, bindings, and where illustrated to single colour and other harmonies. The importance of paper is supreme. I do not mean that it is necessary to have Bachelor hand-made paper. But permanence, lightness, brilliance, those qualities which the science of modern paper-making has brought to perfection, are "per always."

A library of a thousand volumes can be a noble possession. But suppose—the very supposition is dangerous to the heart—suppose instead of limiting me to a thousand volumes my benefactor had said, "Davidson, I have not seen issue from Cambridge, Padua or Salamanca, a man as distinguished. You love learning as other men love physical health. You are a fellow after my mind, a Ronsard with the eruptiveness of Lazarillo de Tormes, and just a pinch—the merest pinch for flavouring—of Aquinas, that brave lad who down the generations has lifted so many struggling scholars out of the multitude. Allow me to prove in a small way my reverence for your great gifts. Accept from me this cheque for £12,000. Go, build yourself a library of twenty thousand volumes, and send the bill to me for whatever it cost over and above."

What would be my first response, after of course



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expressing to my patron my acknowledgments of the honour he had conferred on both of us? I will tell you. Why should I not open my heart? Like Archimedes when engaged on his circles, I would take the precaution to warn Death that I was not to be disturbed, until the last of my twenty thousand volumes had been purchased. Then, enlarged from all care, having got together nineteen thousand volumes, I would stop. I would decide—lest any books which my library should possess be overlooked—to defer the purchase of my last thousand until I had read over the first nineteen, nine times.

But you must not conclude from this that the value of a treasure chest necessarily increases with size. It is easier to design a pyramid than one of those exquisite vases known as Attic Lekythus. Perfection is less easily attainable than magnitude. Tell me—for we are getting to know Spain in these latter years—when you first read Cervantes, which of the two, Don Quixote or Sancho, the knight or his squire, was most in your thoughts? I heard a farmer's wife not so long ago express surprise that, as she put it, "she never thought books, mind you, could be so furnishing." But a single shelf of books, revealing their owner's mind, is a library incomparable with one of five thousand volumes, acquired for furnishing purposes. I do not think that under any circumstances mere numbers are entitled to that reverence which the late Augustine Birrell claimed for them. As a boy this great gentleman may have given away all his pocket money to relieve distress, but he was also from childhood goodly set upon his legs. Behind

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him was a background of exemplary surroundings, a golden childhood, breeding, a leisured home, all those physical facts which give poise to men, but, unless countervailed by devotion to service, tend also to render them idealisers of the smooth.

That was Augustine Birrell. Given five hundred pounds and five years, he says, and an ordinary man could no doubt in the ordinary course surround himself with two thousand volumes, but all pride in such a library would be out of question. "To be proud of having two thousand books would be absurd. You might as well be proud of having two top-coats. Until you have ten thousand volumes the less you say about your library the better. Then you may begin to speak." But perhaps he was not serious. And whether serious or not, what can anyone do except set a nimbus around the head of the man, who, unable to stand any longer that insufferable heavy-weight, Hannah More (1745-1833)—precursor of how many others in these later times—went out and getting his spade, interred the whole twenty-four volumes of her in his garden.

It surely must be due to want of percipience, to the effect of "culture" without education, that we decant our wines as if we had grown and pressed the grape; display our antiques as if we had carved and inlaid them; our pictures as if we had limned them; our autocars as if we had designed and built them; our silver vessels as if we had mined the ore and damascened them, things that had become ours only because, in one way or another, we had obtained control for a time over their disposal. A library is

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the sole form of property, the one possession that we purchase with money, to which the stricture of Hazlitt, his uncompromising pen, has no application. "I have the love of power," he says in that memorable passage, "but not of property. I should like to be able to outstrip the greyhound in speed, but I should be ashamed to take any credit to myself from possessing the fleetest greyhound in the world. I cannot transfer my personal identity to that which I merely call mine."

Having a care only that reading does not interfere with exact observation, once in the possession of a few of the books that have illumined time, you are in the possession of treasure-trove incapable of depletion. Even your endowment to please others is assured. Hearken to this wisdom: "After three days without reading," says a Chinese proverb, "talk becomes flavourless."

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"Oh Sir, we quarrel by the book,  
As you have books for good manners."

—*Touchstone. As you like it.*

TO NICODEMUS DE BINCHY,  
At the University of Thorn.

YOU had a letter, you say, from your friend Dr. Alistair Faversham, that his wife wants to write; that she has refused to listen to the wise counsels of her husband, and asking for your advice. Nick, I take a very serious view of this appeal. I concede your friendship for Dr. Faversham. At the same time, in the name of Augustus! what business can it be of yours whether his wife wants to write or not? So far as married women are concerned, unless it be a question of bread-and-butter, why any of them should want to write, I have never fathomed. They have the unending contradictions of their own minds, their nuptial responsibilities, a hundred delights to occupy them. But this perhaps is not germane to the issue.

My advice to you is to keep out of the business. The wise hold their tongues spread out flat, knowing that all things are resolved by keeping still. We have a story from America concerning the husband of the famous Julia Ward Howe—composer of the hallelujah battle-hymn, the marching song of the American Civil

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War—that on one occasion he was kept awake far into the watches of the night by the heavy tramp, tramp overhead of another guest. You may say, perhaps, that he should have been accustomed to tramping feet, but a man's nerves do not always answer to his will. At any rate on this occasion, unable to stand it any longer, Howe dressed himself and went upstairs. The occupant of the room was sorry, but he could not sleep. He explained that his note-of-hand for a substantial sum was falling due on the morrow, and that he had no way of meeting it. The great philanthropist was sympathetic. "Are you quite sure," he asked, "if the sheriff were to be put in, that there would be a return of 'No goods'?" The man confessed that such was his unfortunate predicament. "Then," said Howe, "get into bed and let the other man walk." Let Faversham walk, Nicodemus. As they say in the County Down, it is he who is married on the woman.

Heaven forbid you should conclude from this that I approve intellectual passivity. Pay mind rather to Montaigne's advice, "the greatest thing in this world is to know how to belong to oneself," meaning that the measure of our usefulness is curtailed unless we understand and equip ourselves to use our individual gifts. A poet does not invent his images. They are a part of him. So a man, unless very unwise, does not indiscriminately decide to train for poetry. Yet to acquire mastery of his gift a poet must concentrate. The truth is we are as different in mental equipment, as the changing fashions. The very faculty of sense in each of us—the



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ear, the eye, the sense of touch—is as distinct as our finger-prints. The wonder of the ear is unending. Mars is not further from earth than was Mozart from the common man. So when you hear of a great physician or aeronaut, you hear of a man with superlative sense of touch and vision. Even the sense of smell—occupying an apparently insignificant place in our economy, so important in the animal kingdom—is set around by a circle of the unknown.

It was during the Great War that I first learned something about the strangeness of this latter. That temporary uplifting of the human race provided innumerable exhilarating contacts. I do not ask you to believe that wisdom comes from me as sweat from another, only that when I speak of the exhilaration of war I am not thinking of the rape, the arson, the loot, by which empires are built, or the ruin which ultimately overtakes them; although the picturesqueness of life may be gone when no empires remain. Indeed, conquest ended, I am not sure that I would not choose an outlier of empire, such as Trinidad is and Ireland and Ancient Britain so long were—as the most fragrant, tax-exempt, care-free possible place in which to be born. It was the view (200 B.C.) of the Greeks, as it was the view of the Albanian people a few months ago. When a small country grows up, throws off the shackles of empire, and assumes the mantle of freedom, there is generally enough cloth only to make mantles for the gentry who take care to become its station-masters and board of directors. For the common people (to carry on the figure of

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speech) the romance of travel is over, while its cost is trebled. And all for what? Glory be to God! for the station-masters and directors of course.

One can only predicate truth of the particular, but does the kingdom of heaven itself not suffer violence? Is not all creation a work of fire? Peace was Mammon's counsel to the fallen angels. So when I raise a lance here in defence of war I am thinking only of the fair exploits, the valiancy, the purgation of the mean, which war—whatever its origin—evokes; which the deeds of brave men, converted by discipline into hardened legionaries, will always evoke.

It is this dedicated service, making men like sons of God, that lifts war out of the poison-glens whence it usually derives. If, owing to its menace of mass-butchery, its increasing cost, and their fear for themselves, the scarlet-stained, international Troglo-dytes of Trade ever succeed in outlawing war, that attainer may well prove the outstanding calamity of society, sinking the human race into such an idolatry of sense and hedonism, as even the Jews never attained during their sojourn in Judea and Samaria. It is the thunderstorm which purifies the atmosphere. The essential evil is not war, as the essential good is neither peace nor democracy. Peace and Democracy would be good horses to ride, if Journey's-end were the "glory of the children of Light," but they are sorry palfreys with the sort of Christians to-day seen astride them. The frankincense tree does not rise out of the blaeberries and long bracken, in the ethical demesnes of these

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merchants of slickness and wealth. The puzzling thing is—if travellers' tales be true—that if you want to see the Christian virtues universally practised, you must seek out some land still untouched by Christianity, like that of the Lepchas in northern India.

The particular war contact I have in mind was with a French liaison officer. During the time our paths lay alongside we became friends. He was the cleverest fellow I ever met at starting unusual hares. Mess-dinner over, how the discussion arose I cannot now recall, except that I had said something about the brain of man.

"The brain of man is, to me, of all organisms the most strange," he fluted his fingers.

"Strange enough," I agreed ruminatingly, for I had in my time come up against some strange disciples. I think he followed my thought.

"Ah yes! but you do not see with the same vision at what I drive. I do not speak of the brain eccentric, but of the brain well-balanced. In your life has it occurred to you that no person, woman or man, in whom the sense of smell is keenly developed, is religious? They may make the display of religion, but that is a thing different. Make catalogues of your acquaintances, and if you can persuade those to admit it, in whom the sense of this organ is dominant, then penetrate for yourself the social pericranium of these ones. Even the most ordinary little duffer—is it not you call him?—has a social pericranium. You will find the lot pagans."

Nicodemus, God forgive me, for the names that

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flashed across my mind. The boldness of the claim took away my breath.

He leant forward with that caressing, picturesque earnestness of his. "Davidson," said he, "mark me. I do not speak to you the opsonic, the thing of doubt. I speak to you a great truth. When that thing which the faculty of medicine so beautifully calls the cerebro-spinal axis has the olfactory sense dominant, whatever the profession of the individual, that individual is a chaser of many 'P's'—pelf, pomp, personal preferment, pretentiousness."

I found it difficult to order my thoughts. To say something I remarked, "'The sense of smell is evil then?'"

He held up his hand. "The physician is content to tell you what is wrong. Test the fact for yourself. There belongs to it exhilaration. Some you will find chase pelf and the rest more noisily. That is all. Because one man can hunt with a *veneur* and *cor de chasse*, another only *en pied*, it does not alter the axis."

That was one-and-twenty years ago, and the impression made on me has not diminished. I will stop there, except for one particle of advice. Poets and philosophers, I am told, should not marry, yet I have a notion that you will marry. Then though she be full of grace as a Chinook salmon, never marry a woman addicted to the use of perfume. Perfume may be merely a symptom, but it is ominous. Have you ever seen a child let the sawdust out of a doll? That woman will let the sawdust flow out of you. She will disrobe your individuality, if not your happiness.

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What a drive is behind this quest—happiness—which someone has described as the sickliest of our ambitions. Whether the colour of the skin be white or black, whether it be the evangelism of George Whitefield or the boat-song of the negro to his colour girl in Tennessee happiness is the goal, collectively and individually, of all religions, all philosophies, all governments, all political and other economies. But instead of inflicting on you my exclamatorily-contemptible opinions, suppose I set down the substance of one of those imaginary conversations (so approved by the erudite) at which I was recently present.

It was in the house of a Signor Mallison. Though not of your Diversity, this distinguished signor may be known to you. He and I are what the learned call anti-diaphragmed, meaning that to each other we are fellows with thumbs on our feet. Occasionally I call on him. I pursue happiness myself along unexpected alleys. This afternoon other signors dropped in, the signor Obreon, the signor McCalistrum, the signor Caffein.

The signor Obreon said : “ Naturally as breathing, the body responds to agreeable sensations, to sweet sounds, entrancing prospects, to the exhilaration of the bath, the wind on the heath, to every feeling-tone we call pleasure. Pleasure is the economics of the body. I distinguish hedonism. A man advances on the road to happiness, he is successful, in proportion as he brings to fulfilment his ordered desires. And pleasure is not merely natural to the body. ‘ The



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more we are stirred to pleasure,' said Spinoza, 'the more fully we partake of the divine nature.' "

You might have been studying one of the portraits of Holbein, so grave was the signor's face. Here, said I to myself, might be one of the early philosophers with the power behind him of a totalitarian state. Mallison at once attacked. "I think we can usefully leave economics out of it, signor. Economists have made a pretty mess of the world and its happiness."

Mallison is always abrupt. Unexpectedly in a gentleman, he is of the sort that does not easily yield the road. The signor Caffein, to whom I thought the first signor's remarks had been addressed, did not reply at once. You know how he chews the cud of thought. It would take from the length and lugubriousness of his countenance if he were to wear those cut-away whiskers which General Burnside immortalised. But he is a very honest man.

"Against what you have advanced, signor," he now replied, "I will only say that the man engaged in the pursuit of pleasure to find happiness, reminds me of the person engaged in an attempt to fly from his family. He has a far journey to travel. What I hold is, that man is born with the penumbra of goodness on his soul. It is what we mean when we speak of conscience, for conscience is an extra-human sanction, not a super-ego, and in this extern faculty by which we distinguish between right and wrong, in this rightness of conduct that we call goodness, in this alone may man find happiness. From the marriage of this extra-human sanction with free-will,

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if I may so put it, are born the virtues, the family of the soul."

Nicodemus, I felt that this was powerful stuff. Mallison was captious. And so, from one to the other, the argument swayed back and forth. But the signor Caffein was not to be shaken. "The test of an ideal," he concluded, "is in its permanent inspirational content. Man cannot dissociate happiness from the idea of permanence; and in so far as his virtuous energies are continuous, he has the power to render his happiness permanent; energies negative to sustain with magnanimity the accidents of fortune, positive to increase the universality of virtue."

Signor Obreon: "That is interesting. You would extend the universal?"

Signor Caffein: "No, sir. The attribute only is universal. Happiness is a piece of many fragments which virtue fits together."

It was at this point the signor McCallistrum intervened; the signor, as you may remember, is the author of that remarkable book, "The Secret Languages of the Duk-Duk Savages"—if I remember the title correctly—from which he obtained his popular designation of "The Boatload of Knowledge." He is a very distinguished and learned man.

"What you express, signor," he said, "is in fact the definition of Aristotle, the corporal thought of goodness allied with happiness. But the mistake made by Aristotle was in regarding happiness as the

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sportsman regards woodcock, something that can be brought down if he is expert enough with both barrels."

Alert as a rabbit snare, the signor is very attractive. "I am not laying down any positive proposition," he continued, "but may not happiness be akin to faith-healing? 'If you cultivate a tendency to happiness,' says Werther, 'you induce happiness. If the sun warm you sufficiently, only a churl will find fault because there are spots on it.' Weather naturally rules all. You cannot induce happiness during a typhoon. But allowance being made for weather, happiness is an effect of illusion. Necessarily so or the effects of contrary causes would not countervail."

Nicodemus, what do you think of that? What did the little signor mean? Of course I recognise that happiness is very puzzling.

When the discussion had lasted an hour by the clock on the mantelshelf, "Gentlemen," I said, "your disputation has rounded out for me a memorable experience. Country people have few opportunities to share in elegant conversation." I looked around at them pleasantly. Then anxious to cheer up the afternoon, "We all admire wisdom," I said, "but can't all be as wise as the testator, who directed by his will that his elder son should divide his farm into two shares, and that his younger son should then have the right to select which share he would take. I am a hundred per cent. out for goodness. Every right-thinking man, if allowed to do it

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his own way, wants to put the devil in a tar-barrel. 'Always do right,' said Mark Twain. 'This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.' At the same time some of the most miserable men I ever met, and the most unpleasant, were deeply religious ones. Women, I said, are the only sure source of happiness the world has ever known. Fortunately they are also plentiful. My point is that happiness does not admit of bisection the same as a beetle. It is to be had, but you cannot buy it by the long ton from either your grocer or philosopher."

I paused to let these facts dribble in. "Does not the true tincture of the affair amount to this," I said, warming up to my subject, "that as between different persons no medicine acts alike? A Ford magneto cannot be fitted into a Morris car. Even in love-making we are different. I could never see anything very wrong about the Welsh practice of 'bundling,' but to the severe virtue of the English, hating all counterfeit shapes and deceitful vizards, it is the greater excommunication. Our very selves, each one of us at different times is actually different. When the mouse drank the spilt brandy, 'Where,' he demanded, 'is the cat?' "

I rippled along light-heartedly quite a while, delighted with myself; but, would you believe it, I might as well have been addressing a row of Buddhist statues. Every signor kept his tongue close under his fist. The signors, of course, were not now wearing their robes and burgomasters' hats. They lacked the faded charm of a period piece, which those achievements of the tailor's and hatter's arts provide.

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Sheer surprise, however, overcoming the expressionlessness by which they customarily disguise their egos, their faces told what their tongues held secret. "You are not of our element, Malvolio," they said. And thereupon by one of those kinks of discourse—Mallison mentioning that the happiest holiday he had ever had was in Bavaria—the talk drifted to sausages, liver dumplings, sauerkraut, to all that hearty and flavoursome food I once shared with you, companion of mine, out there in Thorn, in that exquisite land of Southern Germany. Would you credit it again, the signors seemed more confused about this food than they had been about happiness. When I mentioned that sauerkraut was only best after its seventh heating, they stared at me with blank incredulity. Was it all *prunella*, I wondered, that stuff about *largior hic campus aether et lumine vestit atrato*, or is it *purpureo*? Honestly I believe some of these signors did not know the dish to be a preparation of cabbage.

Perhaps childhood in glowing health, playing a game of make-belief, presents the best picture of happiness. All the essentials are present—physical fitness, indifference to externals, interior resourcefulness, intensity of purpose, surrender of self to the imagination (Signor McCallistrum's illusion). Lucky those who, when manhood arrives, can still play this game.

Types of the sporadic pursuit of happiness are numberless. One man will sample what he believes to be the richness of life in sinking a ten-foot putt ;



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another on the *élan* with which he can bear off a pair of shoulder-slung glasses in the paddock of some race-gathering. This man will savour its essence by slinging a 56-lb. weight ; that, in step-cutting his way up an Alpine ice-face. One man builds a temple or leviathan. Another knocks them down. One finds happiness by control of the eyes, another in a derating curiosity.

I thought the signor Caffein spoke well, though for myself I prefer to regard happiness as a pilgrim. I wonder have you heard of that science, moral geometry, which establishes our four-dimensional happiness, that the universe is in you and me, not we in it. But I must not get into Arctic waters. I might leave my toes in the freeze-out. I send you instead a comfortable quatrain—

Proportion and peace, and a garden with trees ;  
A purpose in life like the busy bees ;  
A wife in step, and no debts to scare,  
And a cosy room for a friend to spare.

If I commanded millions I might (perhaps) submit a different quatrain, but I do not think so. What was the Roman saying ? “ Praise if you will large farms, but till a small one.” I am not idealising the routine of a sheltered life, only that, however magnanimous our passions, there is an inner serenity or sanctuary of the mind within that “ garden with trees ”—which no intruding step should be allowed to violate.

As to Faversham, if he needed your co-operation in some difficulty where your help should, or could

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usefully be given, I would say give it at once. He is your friend. But you are not a veteran in his wife's nervous system. There are occasions when Samuel Gridley Howe's advice points the sanest way, "Let the other man walk."

## PEACE AND À KEMPIS

“ My meaning in saying he is a good man, is to have you understand me he is sufficient.”

—*Merchant of Venice. Act i. sc. iii.*

CERTAIN books written by the great Masters are what Betty Co-ed.—that perennial heaven-sent last word in undergraduates—would call timeless. Timeless in one's undergraduate days has, however, not quite the meaning we afterwards attach to it. When life and love run all together warm and sparkling, we are then ourselves masterpieces. It is only when we become less headlong with the world, that it occurs to us it may have harboured other Olympians.

Do you value the wisdom of age? These Masters have bottled it. Do you value youth? These Masters decant it. Perhaps sometime you have had an eye-shot sent across your bow by a beautiful disdainful woman. These Masters send out that sort of eye-shot. You become aware of yourself. I was reading the other day the opinion of a physician about fruit. He was recommending a morning orange that—both outer and inner skins having been removed—had been shredded, bruised and sweetened the night before. Where is the man who does not set value on the *general* opinions of his physician? This doctor declared fruit to be as “brilliantly invigorating” to the interior as it was refreshing to

the exterior. So with these Masters. They are fruit to the mind. They dissolve in the brain. You forget the smash of principles upon every side. You are refreshed and invigorated.

One additional point has to do with age. There belongs to a variety of things, including saints, an atmosphere deriving from age that only age can give. The practice of systematically attacking the generation we occupy is a different matter. But with saints, age for me at least is a determining factor. Whatever their sublime virtues, I have no interest in the new lines showing in them. For one thing we already have quite a splendid assemblage. In one small island alone off the English coast 20,000 of them are buried. Even the very identification marks, which the long vennel of the centuries has attached to the great illustrious *old* saints, have a fragrance and intimacy that may not be duplicated; Saint Hubert and his antlers, Saint Pancras and his terminus, Saint Lawrence and his gridiron, Saint Gabriel and his horn, Saint Bernard and his dogs, Saint Simeon and his pillar, Saint Crispin and his last, Saint Vitus and his dance, Saint Charles Borromeo and his island, Saint Valentine, exterminator of Vermin, and his Day; Saint Swithin, bishop of Winchester; Saint Anthony (I speak from personal experience), more powerful than any lost-property specialist. I may be a spiritual Die-Hard, but the old vintage saints—patrons of all worthy nailers in paper hats, of cobblers with leather aprons, of tumblers with their wooden boards and all strolling players—were the joyous companions of my boyhood, and I will not be brow-

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beaten (I dislike all brow-beating, whether crowned or mitred) into any change of opinion. And foremost amongst this bright company has been, then and now, à Kempis. Year after year we see the names of the pretentious follow one another over-the-top into oblivion, while this monk, achieving what he least desired, goes on down the generations with never diminished luminosity.

What is the source of this permanence? It certainly is not the message he had to deliver, of Peace, for all men desire peace, the pulpits of the world ring with it, the great nations are spending thousands of millions of pounds on armaments in order to compel it to dwell with us. The source is elsewhere, where neither nations, nobles, nor nobodies, have thought of searching, in renunciation. So sure is à Kempis of his message and power to deliver it, that, as becometh the Pathfinder, he flings down in his opening words the challenge, "*Qui sequitur me, non ambulat in tenebris—Who follows me, walketh not in darkness.*"

And how do we find this Pathfinder equipped for his task? There is not a notch on his axe, not a bloated word, not a straining of sense from cover to cover. He may be omni-satisfied as a Trade Union Council, but there is as vast as there is gracious difference.

The ease and power of this book rest in no small degree upon its inexorableness. It attracts as everything which defeats attracts, the pressures of the glacier that mock majority rule, the volcano that we cannot lull, the honour that we cannot buy. Every



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feature of the "Imitation" bears away admiration. And there is this to admiration. None of us may be privileged to write tragedies like Euripides, to discover new islands like Columbus, to lead imperishable forlorn-hopes like General Robert Lee, but it is imperatively permissible to admire. And in admiring are set free noble emotions. And from noble emotions is prepared the yeast of the world.

À Kempis was born at Kempen, in the diocese of Cologne, at the end of the 14th century, of ordinary parents, if the parents of such a son could be ordinary. There have been many lives of him written, but these are of little import. It is the men who live biography that matter, not the tailors who measure them for books. One does not search the Municipal Gallery of Lilliputians for a life-size portrait of Gulliver. Save for a few dates we have all the knowledge that is essential in what À Kempis himself has written. Going into Holland as a young man, he passed the remainder of his life there. Dwelling thus among a seafaring people, life was perceptibly presented to him in the figure of a voyage between two ports. To secure for all the happy issue of that voyage alone concerned him. So all his days, to this end he occupied a sort of spiritual Crow's Nest, keeping both the early and late watches. But allow me to introduce you to him in the flesh.

From the size of his book you might suppose him to be small. He is the reverse. He is tall above the average and of figure symmetrical. His face is austere, yet its austerity cannot cancel the mind glowing so gently behind it. His indeed is one of

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these arrestingly supreme countenances. It has length without the disfigurement attaching to length. Group him in any company and instantly it is illumined. Turn these thoughts over, and see how your judgment of some of the countenances that you know will be affected. But wine is sweet, to pay for it bitter. All this nobility continuously disturbs him. None knew better than à Kempis that there is not any more powerful cross-bolt in the armoury of the devil than pride. "Boast not of thy stature nor beauty of the body," he admonishes us in one passage. "Do not take pride in thy talents or wit," he appeals to us in another. During the vigils of the night he paces the confines of his cell. "Who has known conflict," he cries out, "who has not striven to attain mastery of himself?"

Publishers, those worthy gentlemen who have driven so flourishing a trade in the *De Imitatione*, call it a manual of devotion. How shall I characterise that definition? The sun, says the geography, is the centre of the planetary system!—that sun which is the creator of a million daily miracles, of joy, colour, fragrance, beauty, life. The *Imitation* is a confession, and by the consensus of the Academy which resolves these things, confessions are accorded a place amongst the greatest literature. The *De Imitatione* is amongst the greatest of the Confessions. It is not easy for us, the common people, to realise what sacrifice its crystal-clear writing demanded. Gifted as he was, à Kempis understood the tremendous responsibility of the task which, as the comrade of humanity, he had set himself. Authorship is a well

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in which many souls are drowned. Pride dogs every page. Each word must be chosen, each sentence constructed, the sequence of sentences arranged, to excel. They must be watered by genius or they altogether fail. By genius I mean only that equipment of mind which cannot be copied. Distinction is sometimes drawn between genius and talent, but the result is not fortunate. They are not susceptible of comparison.

The three first books of the *Imitation* are made up of little five-minute exercises in which, as one of ourselves, this anchorite converses with us about our cracks and flaws, drawing for us from the black-and-white keys of life a melody that lingers in the heart. à Kempis knew the perils of such a masterwork, the lust of fame, the vainglory of craftsmanship, the subtle corruption of the soul induced by intellectual awareness, but out of love for man, the great Orphan, he submitted himself to the eternal vigilance inseparable from his self-appointed labour. At the time of his death, we are told, he had attained the fifty-eighth year of his priesthood, the sixty-third of his clothing, the ninety-second of his age. Twenty-two years of life beyond the allotted span, an Indian summer through every day of which the fragrance of his beloved Holland had blown. His death occurred in the year 1471, at Zwolle, in the beautiful province of Oberyssel, adjoining those wonder-polders regained by Dutch engineers for the Dutch people from the Zuiderzee and Weiringermeer lake; Oberyssel\* in

\* When complete, Holland will have been enlarged by 550,000 acres or 7 per cent, at a total cost of £120,000,000.

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the heart of Holland—where every child is well brought up—where the art of living has not altered since à Kempis dwelt there. We are told that it was in the hush following the apodeipnon as it is called, the after-supper service of the monastery—the evening of a summer's day, a day of blown roses, of murmuring bees, of quivering heat—that he breathed forth his spirit. Is not the notion irresistible, that it had been ordained the fulfilment of his life should coincide with this hour? the one hour of the twenty-four when man comes as near the divine as he ever may; those soft diffused minutes while evening-silence settles into night, when for a breathing space we are lifted out of our concentrations.

à Kempis lived in an age when horizons were permanent, when speed was symbolic of angelhood, when the voice of an angry God spoke to us in the thunder. Has science brought us closer to either truth or happiness? Perhaps at no period was the Christian ideal more nearly conterminous with Roman-Hellenistic civilisation, that offspring of wisdom and devotion to beauty, from which Christianity is *humanly* inseparable. So at this vesper hour wisdom and beauty seem more nearly conterminous, clearer—sometimes radiantly clearer—just as at Zwolle that summer's evening, à Kempis must have seen their unity and been content. Every page of the *Imitation* supports this conceit, that this passing-hour had been specially granted him. Consider the moulds into which its vision of perfection is cast, those little twilight chapters between love and the heart,

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thought and the mind, each filled with the mystery of crepuscle.

I will not disparage the reader further. To send my Valentines after this recluse is to add leaves to the forest. You are a stylist. Examine his pages. Observe how diffidently he refers to and would make apology for his gifts. The divine writers availed themselves of the charm and fluidity of words. For the swifter and more enduring enlightenment of men's hearts they bent themselves to master the devices of rhetoric. "But truth is to be sought for in the Holy Scripture, not eloquence." And if one so obscure as he has used certain graces of composition, it is only because "God speaks many ways to us, without respect of persons," he pleads in extenuation of himself. "The weaker he whom I use," God answered Moses, "the more he showeth My strength." à Kempis, a *peregrinum in terram* as he describes himself, is merely one under authority. He is overwhelmed with pious shame for the graces he is obliged to invoke.

And what graces! Compilers of religious books have—without acknowledgment—raked the *Imitation* for centuries, for ideas, material, copy. In this little hesitating compendium of the heart, all the legitimate devices of persuasion are fused into an amalgam that resists analysis. Yet the *Imitation* may be read from cover to cover by the unlettered mind, and every line understood without conscious effort.

Let us examine in a little more detail into it. He writes with elegance. A scholar, the learning of schoolmen and philosophers has been weighed by him



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and passed into his service, but you remain oblivious to it. A grammarian, he knows how ruthless an enemy the adjective can become of the noun. Every chapter bears impress of his sifting of the art of Longinus, of "sublimity the echo of the soul." He is a master of accent, rhythm, quantity, as he is master of the Latin tongue in which he writes. His prose is always smooth-flowing. His sentences are balanced in a goldsmith's scale. He understands to the degree of perfection the employment now of *aparithmesis*, now *incrementum*. He abounds in symmetrical constructions.

"He is truly great, who is great in charity.

He is truly great, who is little in his own eyes.

He is truly learned, who relinquishes his own will."

He uses with judgment every dignified figure that can be made to serve the cause of wisdom. Synecdoche, synonymy, contrast by reverse parallelism, alliteration, all are silver fish to his net. Antithesis he cannot resist. "No man is secure in appearing abroad, but he who would willingly lie hid at home. No man securely speaks, but he who loves to hold his peace. No man securely governs, but he who would willingly live in subjection. No man securely commands, but he who has learned well to obey." He invites you to come with him into "the pleasant fields of Scripture," but in general he uses metaphor sparingly. Yet when he wills, the figure soars with him. Living in the summer home of the stork, a lover of birds, he has watched their planing wings. He wants an image that by its vital

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force will reconcile us to one of the bitterest of his lessons. "He rides at ease who is carried by the grace of God."

Passionately worshipping external nature, he is restricted to one small corner of it. It provides him with an opportunity to allay one of our most restless longings, the craving for travel. "What canst thou see elsewhere which thou seest not here?" he urges. "The imagination and changing of places have deceived many." "Seek peace within." "That man has great tranquillity of heart who cares neither for praise nor dispraise"—if only he could bring men to this faith. Everywhere he pours the anodyne of interior resource into the soul. "As often as I have been amongst men," he quotes Seneca—that paradox of all the philosophies—"I have returned less a man."

That the *De Imitatione* is a masterpiece might have militated against it. Masterpieces exhaust. A masterpiece by a recluse—one to whom the watch spent in prayer is refreshing slumber—the polar wind has already passed over it. Yet this book continues generation after generation to be taken up and left down by all manner and races of men. The believer and unbeliever (the man with a vital focus) return to taste its bitter fruit, for to à Kempis there is no Round Table of Christianity. To admire the beautiful is orthodox, just as nature must be supported. "But to require superfluities and such things as are delightful, thy holy law forbids." His gospel is complete renunciation. Our self-love cries out against its severities. But either we are followers of

Christ or we are not. His headline is stark. "The saints and friends of Christ served God in hunger and thirst." That is to say, the kingdom of heaven does not suffer the violence of lip-filibuster.

à Kempis unsuspectingly uses the A + B Theorem of the advocates of Social Credit. The price of salvation, he reiterates, cannot be less than the sum of the whole of the renunciations it entails. There is a Dutch cleanliness about his logic. He will not allow a spider to lurk in any corner of the household of faith. To-day, when the rubrics of a gentleman—or follower of Christ—are found so often reset to the tempo of the *Roundabouts*, the rhythms of the Imitation have the healing of a canticle. Each one has the integrity, the æsthetic quality of that French catholicism, which makes for us those exquisitely-idealised little pictures, sometimes lace-eged, that we put between the leaves of our prayer-books. The *Imitation* is a period book, A.D. 1-33. It never leaves by a hair's breadth the convention of its date. None escapes. The Lord will understandingly forgive us when we enjoy some of his unaffected castigations. "The tonsure contributes little to make a religious man," he says regretfully. "Many are under obedience more out of necessity than from the love of God," he comments dryly.

à Kempis is a spiritual Glumdalclitch, the young guide forty feet high who had charge of Gulliver in giant-land. But he is no Savonarola. He could not be, for like his Master his mind was too exquisitely sensitive. And if the peaks which he takes in his

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stride are impossible to Christians of our stature, still our hearts go out to him for his rebel verdict upon fame.

à Kempis places the ambition to hand on one's name in his scales, balancing it. That work of yours upon the *Termites*—with its solemn background of imaginative synthesis—which so fittingly has crowned an illustrious career, that surely will remain effective. The vast untutored *Libido* may sweep on, but there are some things like this so brilliantly scholarly an exegesis of yours, that will resist submergence. Listen to à Kempis: "When a man is taken away from sight, he is quickly also out of mind." He is laconic, this Brother of the Common Life. "Tell me now," he asks elsewhere, "where are all those great doctors with whom thou wast acquainted whilst they were living and flourished in learning? Now others possess their chairs, and I know not whether a passing thought be once given them."

That was five hundred years ago. Ireland was steeped then in strife, north, south, east and west, another gift to it from its "best customer." In Wales, Glendower was raising the standard of his personal ambitions. The War of the Roses was ravaging England. In France Joan of Arc was riding out her meteoric career. And those great doctors who then flourished in learning, ah but they are very dead indeed now!

To bring to an end the *costless* creation of interest-bearing money, to advance the just distribution of real wealth; to penetrate the secrets of nature for the alleviation of pain; to carve, if you are so gifted,

finished grotesqueries from the resistant stone; to strive towards beauty in any form, in these you may find the very brain of Jupiter. But fame as an end! And fame when dead! Of all the non-dividend paying investments in which men have speculated, that of post-mortem immortality seems easily first, an immortality to which they are blind, deaf, dumb, senseless. And yet at one time or another none of us has escaped this disorder. If I may descend to bathos, possessed of two pairs of binoculars I once lent one of them—the worst pair—to a sailor. “Danny Robin” we called him, a neighbour of mine, whom I believed to be really fond of me. My loan, though I did not say so, was intended to be turned into a gift. My name had been engraved on the steel frame, and it would be something, I reflected, by which he would always remember me. As will happen, the hand of negation was unexpectedly laid on him. He was dead within a six month. When I retrieved the glasses, I found that my name had painstakingly been cut out. I was younger then and remember feeling a twinge, and yet even then I understood. The mere sight of the thing, with my name on it, spoiled all Robin’s enjoyment in it.

Perhaps the most incredible thing about this mystery book is that, put to the test of experience, its solutions not only salve but re-energise. “Take courage then,” it cheers us on, “and be brave in the doing and suffering of things repugnant to Nature. Others shall be great in man’s esteem, but of thee no notice shall be taken. That which is pleasing to others shall go forward, that which thou wouldst



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have shall not succeed. What others say shall be hearkened to, what thou sayest shall not be heeded. To others this or that shall be committed, but thou shalt be accounted fit for nothing."

And then, the gentlest of evangelists, he hastens to bind up the wounds that he has opened and probed. The trail that he has blazed may be hard on the feet, but "there is no creature travelling it so small as not to represent the goodness of Providence." Having cut his way through the forest of our sophisms, he puts into our hand that herb which the Greek allegory put into the hand of Odysseus, the root of which was black, but the blossoms milk-white. M. Jules Lemaitre, an agnostic, searching for the secret of the power within this book, arrives at the same conclusion through a different mental process. "Pessimism," he says, "is the half of saintliness. In the Imitation it is the half which makes us indulgent of the other. We seek in it for the means not of sanctifying ourselves, but of pacifying ourselves, not a cordial but a nepenthe."

There is truth behind the irreverence of the French sceptic. It is pleasant to listen to those things being underweened and held of small account which we cannot command; to have the trivialities of wealth, office, rank, power, set in a soothing perspective against the magnitudes of time and space. It gratifies us to emulate the disdainful impassibility of the Mona Lisa. Yet such satisfactions in fact bear testimony to the dangers against which he warns us. "We are all frail, but see thou think no one more frail than thyself."

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à Kempis is not a *homo universalis in omnibus rebus* like da Vinci. He is not an artist as Botticelli was an artist. He goes straight to his goal. There is no mystery of broken music to his rhythms. He is a realist (if any meaning still attaches to the word). Personally—for convention graciously allows of the tonsured obtrusion of the personal—I never underwent a visitation or disillusionment for which quarter-of-an-hour with the *Imitation* did not compensate.

Peace, if you will accept my testimony, is as timid as a mushroom, and as easily broken. Nor, if history be a guide, has it ever been purchased at the price alone of any external precaution whatever.

Where is Peace? the nations ask one another. Is it not strange they have not thought of taking a leaf out of à Kempis? “Take this short and perfect way,” he counsels. “Let men leave their desires and they shall find it.”

## THE HORSE AND THE NORMAN LEGEND

"This gallant pins the wenches on his sleeve."

—*Love's Labour's Lost. Act v. sc. ii.*

TO EDMUND LA TOUCHE,  
At the University of Thorn.

YOU wish me to tell you, dear young boy, what I think of your essay on the Normans. I will be candid. You have not yet emerged from the larger body of brilliant, inimitable writers into that more tenuous company whose style and matter have got to be assessed.

Your prose displays quality. I can see ideas in it. In your mingling of the more florid with Euclidian phrases you betray a quality recognised as implicit in distinction. And having said so much I must mix bitter with sweet. As contributing to an intelligent appreciation of the Normans your effort is worthless. This is the more to be regretted, because, in your selection of a theme a rare opportunity was provided you. The moment was yours to plant a blow on such a windmill, as fortune never accorded to the knight of la Mancha. The books of research were open to you. You allowed them to remain open. Trains of compelling thought were waiting to be boarded. They still wait. For history you substitute legend ;

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for a commanding thesis on an absorbing subject, a Sunday school lecture. You seem also too pleased with your intelligence. If you are writing a booklet for the multitude, exaggerated simplicity of phrase may be permissible. In literature you address equals.

As I am compelled to cut you to pieces in this way with my own conceit, you are entitled to ask I should be more explicit. Be it so. First of all things then, the searcher for Norman truth must unlearn the laboriously built-up fiction that there were two races of Northmen, Danes and the Normans of Scandinavia. Whether regarded geographically, dynastically, or ethnographically, this dual-race theory has not a nucleus of fact to support it. If we take the Standard dictionary—that fruit of so great learning—at page 2186 we find the word Scandinavia defined as “the land of the Norsemen, formerly including Denmark and Iceland with Norway and Sweden.” Whether we consult French, English, or German authority we discover, that from whatever part of Scandinavia the crews for the piratical craft of these Northmen were drawn, their captains—Guthrum, Swayne, Rolf, Canute—hailed from those southern shores of the Baltic that we know to-day as Denmark. Indeed it was not until the time of the grandfather of Gustavus Adolphus that these southern Northmen surrendered any part of the suzerainty they exercised over the then inhabited parts of Norway and Sweden.

You see, despite the infirmity of our records, we are not in quite so bad case on this voyage of discovery, as was Columbus, of whom it is told, that he did not know when he set out whither he was going,

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where he was when he got there, where he had been when he returned home to his king and queen. Yet his achievement was considerable.

Next, it will appeal to your ardent and generous spirit, when I concede that these *wickings*—to give them their first and aptest title—were partakers in a tradition that is of all ages. For whatever else these men of the *wicks*—or fjords of the Baltic—were not, they were men who woke up each morning ready for breakfast, and when that was finished, for whatever else their captains might decide was to come after. The purpose of these captains was criminal. Their followers, however, were just sons of the storm, men who with a sardonic twinkle in their eyes rode down the main, in their boats sixty feet long, prepared to show the dudes of civilisation in Ireland, Britain, and France, how men did things. The spirit of conflict for conflict's sake, old as the human heart, was their driving force, the same effort-provoking call of adventure for adventure's sake that was later to arouse the Basques and Castilians of Spain, the Elizabethans in England. They were the cream of a salty breed, these wickings. They made history these men. And for an authentic appraisal of them, the repercussions of their murderous exploits must be assessed. That is the furthest we get until 911, a year the most memorable, for it witnessed the treaty of Seine-sur-Epte.

There have been many remarkable treaties signed on the banks of the Seine from 911 to 1918, but surely none other so storied. Treaties are to many more deeply significant of our common nature than



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war. The vanquished make the best terms they can, and proceed thence to plan how, with the least possible delay, they may recover their lost meadows in the valley of plenty. Politicians—those clyers in the lymphatic glands of society—have been known to plead for the strict observance of treaties without batting an eye (to borrow a phrase from the vernacular) but “wise men,” said Margaret of Navarre, wife of the last Plantagenet Henry, “ne’er sit and wail their loss, but cheerily seek how to redress their harms.”

Under the terms of this Treaty, the Danes—previously precariously dibbled along the French Atlantic coast—were assigned a part of the province of Neustria and taken into the French hegemony. Referring to this pact in his “History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages,” Sir Charles Oman says—you will observe that he speaks of Danes not Normans—“It was the increasing difficulty and barren results of their raids in France which led the Danes of Rolf in 911 to come to the same bargain with Charles the Simple, which the Danes of Guthrum had made with Alfred of Wessex in 878. When the king offered them a great *Danelagh*, reaching from the river Epte to the western sea”—given by the king the name of Normandy—“Rolf and his followers accepted the bargain and agreed to draw together, settle down, and make peace with the Franks.”

Perhaps I should take up for you at this point the legend of the Vi-king. The evolution of wicking into Vi-king was attended, perhaps appropriately, with pirates’ luck. It seems easy of accomplishment

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now that it has become an adult organism, as most things achieved seem easy. You just removed its 'c' from wicking, changed its 'w' to a capital 'V,' divided what remained by a hyphen, and lo! this descendant of the Nordic Valhalla steps into the arena, hero of youth, idol of maidens, adored of married women. He still lacked the helmet. The saga and helmet, crowned with the wings of Astarte, were later refinements.

It has been claimed, but I fear it must be marked "Not Proven," that this evolution, with its gulf between Dane and Norman, was the work of the first Plantagenet. No doubt Henry was not alone a twelfth-century Hitler, but a master of wiggle-waggle. Witness his matrimonial alliances. The king, too, was not proud of his descent from the wen-faced Rolf and his Danes. The story might be true, and if it were, the king was also the one to see that no man laid a thumbnail, even in sleep, on anything he did or said.

Writing of the later developments of this legend—or more correctly myth—Mr. Wickham Steed (whom it is a pleasure on this occasion to quote) says, "The chief exponent of this Nordic legend was a French diplomat and man of letters, Count Alexandre de Gobineau, who, in the fifties of the last century published two volumes upon *The Inequality of Human Races*. Then successively or simultaneously, Nietzsche and Richard Wagner, each in their several ways and sometimes in strife with one another, helped to spread it. Their works, and particularly Wagner's operas, carried the vague metaphysics of it

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throughout the greater part of the world, though nowhere save in Germany did these metaphysics, set to music in a way that foment nervous and æsthetic excitement, become a national religion."

Yet long before Gobineau, listen to the enlightened and superficial Hume, whom Mr. David Lloyd George—with the connivance of the Director of Talks—recently presented to us over the radio as "the sceptical philosopher." Writing of the year 1066, a short century-and-a-half after the Danish Rolf and his followers, having conformed to Christianity, had been collected into the corner of France assigned to them by the French king, this sceptical philosopher says, "The Normans as they had long been distinguished by valour among all Europeans, had at this time attained to the highest pitch of military glory. Besides acquiring by arms such a noble territory in France, besides defending it against continued attempts of the French monarch and all its neighbours, besides exerting many acts of vigour under their present sovereign (duke William) they had about this very time revived their ancient fame by the most wonderful successes in the southern extremity of Europe."

I solicit your attention to this passage. Mr. Hume says, "Besides defending it (Normandy) against continued attempts of the French monarch and all its neighbours." But the only neighbour of Normandy was France itself, which was its suzerain. When under the Treaty of 911, Charles set aside a portion of his northern province of Neustria, as a reservation for these Danish freebooters, how in fact did his new

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subjects implement that treaty? The ink was no more than dry on it, when they set themselves to study how it could be evaded, though once only between 911 and 1066, in 928-929, did they break out into open rebellion, a rising crushed at Limoges with immense slaughter.

Mr. Hume says again: "They had about this very time revived their ancient fame by the most wonderful successes in the southern extremity of Europe," meaning, as this philosopher was aware, that they had renewed in the Mediterranean Sea these razzias which once had spread such ruin throughout Ireland, northern France, and Germany. One incident from these *successes* must suffice. Having failed to storm the little town of Luna in Italy, these Northmen sent a message to the ruling bishop that their chief, Hastings, was dead, expressing their desire for an end of hostilities, and that the body of their leader should be received in the cathedral. Without harbouring a suspicion, bishop and citizens threw open the gates of their gallant city. They did not even know from whence these strangers had descended on them. But it was all over now, peace had come again, and they were sorry for the bereaved in the presence of death. And now with measured tread the mourners enter, bearing an empty casket through the streets. Then, the solemn obsequies of the Church begun, at a given signal bishop and all within the cathedral are slaughtered, and the town delivered to pillage and the sword.

Dear Boy, as you grow older, as your range of knowledge diminishes, believe me you will find few

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sources of intellectual refreshment to equal those afforded by the true and untrue accounts of these, as they were ultimately to prove themselves, so great administrators. We are told that a monk is a man whose life is dedicated to truth. But the monkish scribes, whom the Normans appointed their chroniclers, do not commend themselves to one as truth-lovers. Even Charles Homer Haskins, gate-crashing Norman apologist from Harvard University—that University which has discarded the bushel as a means to modesty—even this gentleman naïvely admits these chroniclers were addicted to “retouching” truth. But if one cannot commend the truthfulness of these monks, particular study can be commended of the period from 911 to 1066, of the evolution of these Northmen (or, as for convenience I shall call them from this onward, Normans). These one hundred and fifty years form a period at once the most arresting and vital in the Middle Ages.

It witnessed the emergence of Europe from the Darkness of the preceding centuries, the consolidation of France as its premier kingdom. It saw the first fruits being gathered of the new cultural harvesting of Christendom inaugurated by Karl Magnus. It gave birth to that Holy Roman Empire which was to linger on, at least in name, into the nineteenth century. It coincided, after centuries of wrangling among military experts, with the supremacy of the cavalry arm. Above all it ushered in the reign of the armoured knight with his art of chivalry, that feudal tenure of society which for ten centuries to follow was to dispose of the ploughed land of the earth and its



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fallow. The descendants of Rolf and his followers in their new French Duchy of Normandy were observant watchers of these events, for among other remarkable qualities no race had surer intelligence of what, and what not to assimilate. In war they learned almost to a black art the exact moment when to break camp, when to press the gate of the barricade. The rapid evolution of military science during this period—the glacis and embattled keep, the new circumvallation of towns, the adoption of the crestless headpiece, the joining of hauberk with mail shirt, the rise of the horse—nothing escaped their vigilance. The horse fascinated them. Knights they saw were not chosen to ride on an ass or mule. The horse was like the four-sided sails of their once fear-spreading piratical fleets. Mounted on him, they beheld Europe encircled, their fame a joy in their ears.

In these days of mechanical propulsion, not the least remarkable aspect of life is the ease, amounting to indifference, with which we have deposed the horse from the intimate place he so long and picturesquely occupied in the affairs of man. No clipper-ship of the seas has ever been fairer to watch than the great horses of a nation moving with their slow grace through the centuries of its history. And man upon the saddle of a horse! prince or cowboy, Indian or Arab, even a policeman mounted on his back, has his cap set high on him.

The life story of the horse goes back beyond the first commencements of history. He makes his premier appearance with hoofed animals in the Tertiary age. Paleolithic man hunted him for food.

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Coming to the reindeer period, geological remains establish his already assured position. That position he retained undisturbed down to the present century, for Asiaticus, Africanus, or Frisius, his speed, courage, fidelity docility, gentleness, made him the inseparable indispensable companion of man. The ancient naturalists said of him—and you can accept their word for it if it be pleasing to you—that he possessed these qualities of gentleness and docility, because his eyes had the singular quality of magnifying the world about him, so that he saw, and sees, his rider as a giant astride an insignificant quadruped.

I may not be in love with that section of humanity which breeds and breaks and traffics in this prince of the animal kingdom, or with the devotion to him of the race-going equestrian.

O, what a noble piece of work, the horse!

How superbly they prance! like a captain who has been promoted to be a major.

How beautiful they look when they are all behind, except the one that is entrusted with your wager.

But for the *genus equus* to which this breed of persons have attached themselves, I laugh ho, ho! The mere tremendous personality of the horse vibrates emotion. Even regarded as a chattel—on the ploughland, under the old stage coach, in the hunting field, on the race track—he calls forth sentiments to banish, if only for a passing while, the Retaliations of our minds. Says that most attractive of this generation of professional jockeys, Steve Donoghue, “The great horses have been great



*Equus Caballus Frisius.*



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because of their fine temperaments and good heads." Man created romance when he put the horse under the old tantivy coach. About hunting one has to make reservation, because hunting in Ireland has been regrettably linked with tyranny. But outside Ireland, upon what the horse brought to this form of pastime, Beckford has never been bettered: "Hunting is the soul of country life: it gives health to the body, and content to the mind; and is one of the few pleasures we can enjoy without prejudice either to ourselves or our friends." \*

The history of the horse—qualified only as below—is the history of man's most enduring, stainless passion, as it is the history of the rise, or fall, of the great nations of the pre-mechanised world. The horse made possible the achievements of the eighteenth and nineteenth Egyptian dynasties. He accomplished the downfall of the Jews—the Hebrews for some reason do not look their best in a saddle—he was responsible for the final overthrow in its decadence of the Roman empire, and, differently, for the collapse of the Saxon kingdom. On his back Charlemagne completed the unification of Europe. He was the whole feudal age. To the *chivalry* of that age he was what the musician is to his instrument. It raises a different issue, how far man has deserved his impressive confidence. It is not a pleasant reminiscence, how, from the dawn of history (with the exception of the Saxons and Irish), man has sacrificed

\* The best "English" horses known on the Continent in the 15th century were Irish, the black Irish hobbies, called in France, *hobbini*.



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this noble animal upon the altar of his feuds and intransigence.

### PART, II.

MY young compatriot, if you are seriously minded to examine into the *vidimus* of the Norman, it is essential to get fixed in your head some of his outstanding points. Foremost among these is loyalty to race. Duke William, later to be styled "The Conqueror," may besiege his uncle in the castle of Arques. This uncle may attempt to seize his nephew's duchy on the ground that the latter's parentage is flawed. But let an outside foe appear and all ranks are closed. It would be difficult to say that the Norman did not deserve his success. Few other combinations of men have possessed their quality of united resistance to strain, their facility of adjustment to occasion, such prolonged superbly co-ordinated vitality. Hume speaks of valour, and if by valour he meant contempt of death, no race has shown more indifference to it, but by no means the indifference of rashness. The Norman's indifference to danger was only equalled by his lust of life and its possessions. And if you add to these qualities, his re-conditioning of that force which he discovered for himself—I refer to propaganda—then it did not need second-sight to know that things were going to happen as soon as opportunity arrived. In 1066 the patiently awaited opportunity came.

The victory of Hastings deservedly ranks among the decisive battles of the world, and then stands alone. Consider a few aspects of it. No ode has

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been written in its commemoration. No record exists that its anniversary was ever celebrated, even by the Normans. It had no world significance in the sense that attaches to Chalons, to the victory over the Saracens at Poitiers, to Lepanto. For the destruction of Carthage, the invasion of Gaul, the sack of Jerusalem, there may be anterior historical excuse. The seizure of Saxon England by the Norman was "a lewde and evell deed," of a piece with the Spanish subversion of the Incas, the provocation of Hyder Ali Khan by the East India Company, the "Clearances" and enforced perversion of the land of Ireland to support adult castrated quadrupeds instead of men. When—taking advantage of the temporary strife then dissipating the energy of this already opulent and distinguished Saxon nation—William of Normandy landed with his army in Sussex a major crime was committed. Buckets of ink have been poured over the fields of Senlac and Hastings. It was waste. They could not be made blacker.

The mastership of England was a pretty large-sized plum to drop into one's lap, but to the Normans of the eleventh century it was not an end. Its importance lay in its wealth and the secure base for Continental operations it was capable of providing. For weary centuries, however, it was to be a sufficient end of the Saxon. I am grieved that you should have missed the opening which your selected theme provided. It is the very stuff of patriotism, the protracted joust of a steel-clad autocracy with race, home, fireside, language, folk-song, law, literature.

The Norman and early Plantagenet kings never

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familiarised themselves with Saxon tradition, laws, or letters. Their attachment was for France, where, reaching out to Guyenne and beyond it, they were continuously extending their territory. Summing up this mentality one distinguished French historian says : “ First and last they were dukes of Normandy and Aquitaine and counts of Anjou, and only *par les hasards de succession rois d’Angleterre*. ” Their chief residences were there. When in the time of Henry II their dream of empire took definite shape—an empire stretching from the Hebrides to the Adriatic Sea—France was to be the heart, Paris the omphalos of it. And when, in the reign of Edward the third the war of the French succession was launched, doubtless they might have achieved it, if there had been no unpurchasable honour, no Charles V of Valois, no Maid of Orleans, no Bertrand de Guesclin of Brittany.

And what is happening in England during those centuries? The story in part is told in *Ivanhoe*. Thegne, gesith and ceorl were levelled to a common helotry ; that Britain—into which Roman civilisation had bitten so deeply—lay hushed, all glad hopes and expectations naught. Enveloped in the mist of present British imperial dreams it is easy to forget those centuries, the stillness of the land broken only by the barking of Norman dogs. The day was blest, when the swish was unheard of a Norman hunting-crop as it fell across Saxon shoulders. The native race breathed by sufference. A rabbit might not be killed save by a Norman *jongleur*.

There is a pregnant quality about nations. The

individual may be a poltroon, the group venal, but the race never wavers from the right. So in time it came to pass that Norman knight and Saxon bowman were welded, not into a Norman but a Saxon people, the elder name of the land, Britain, being revived. Centuries, however, were to elapse before this unification. The struggle for France continued deep into the fifteenth century. But in time, as the dream of a Continental empire commenced to pale, we find the Norman recalling his old adaptability to environment, more French than the Franks, more English than the Saxons. Old John of Lancaster comes to life. The splendid figure of Henry, first of that line—"who plucked bright honour from the pale-faced moon"—appears. The yeomen of Saxon England begin to take pride in their share of the king's achievements. Saxon and French craftsmanship combine to clothe the country with those fanes, which, while stone endures, will dazzle the imagination. But the *structure* of Society is rottenness, and it is a Saxon, Langland, who lashes that Society, the cruelty, obscenity, graft, orguloty, deceit, behind its sickening vesture of sanctity, a chastisement in itself proof of how the Saxon is beginning to make his influence felt, how the people at last are sensing their strength. Gradually the ancient learning of the land is uncovered. By the time of Chaucer—clothed in its new dress of Middle English—the erudition of Caedmon, Bede, Cynewulf, Aelfric, Biscop, Wilfred, asserts itself. It is a feathered story the re-conquest of England by the silent Saxon. Perhaps, naturally, the Wars of the Roses only helped the people. Freeman does not

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exaggerate the final victory when he says, "The older and stronger elements survived and in the end made good their supremacy," even the very language to-day bearing scarce a trace of the jargon of its once Norman masters.

None the less, though it begat neither a Dante nor Tasso, the legend of the Normans is among the world's greatest sagas. Were it true that Henry II bred it, he bred what the Fraternity calls a stayer, "Viking, by Inveracity out of Scandinavia, out of Propaganda."

But you protest, perhaps, that the Norman arch and doorway are authentic. There is an arch, also a doorway so called, a part of the saga. That the Norman should attach his name to the architecture which during those centuries was to grace the English countryside was natural. The same thing is done every day. Foundation stones carry the names of men who could not design a hen-coop. The Norman never drew or devised a plinth much less an arch. He never forged a link of his armour. He never damascened a sword that he buckled to his side. He never fashioned one piece of gold or silver plate for civilisation. He never added one bead to the learning of Europe. He never dressed or laid one stone upon another of the buildings to which he gave his name.

One must pay tribute to the affectionate earnestness which went into the making of such a book as the late Arthur Weigall's "Grand Tour of Norman England," but Norman architecture with its beak-head ornament, early Norman, Norman transitional, Norman-Romanesque, the whole of it—Frank and



Teuton brains contrived it, Saxon hands fashioned it—the only part played in it by the Norman was that he paid for it out of the loot lifted off its French and Saxon creators.

Perhaps you will think that I am now enjoying myself. But permit me, without overloading, to quote from just one international authority. “What is called the Norman school,” says Michel, “dispute the honour of having created the elements of the style Gothic, but it is beyond doubt that the ensemble of the style—its structural combinations, its system of composition, its ornamentation—originated in that region which is comprised within the Isle de France and Picardy.”

The story written down by those Norman chroniclers may not be as old as ink, but it is the story of men who knew more and more of less and less. To the Norman horse these clerks—in return for their salaries—gave all but divine honours. Indeed the horse has been among the capital blunders of Norman propaganda. As for the breed so styled, it never existed. When Rolf the Ganger, or *Walker*, found himself at last settled down, a naturalised citizen of France, he was introduced to that illustrious equine strain, commended by St. Jerome 350 years earlier, that northern breed of horses to which the name *equus caballus Frisius* is given, which was afterwards crossed by the Merovingian Franks with the great black horses of Burgundy and Thuringia. No praise is too great for those superb strains, only in yielding it I would not have you think I derogate from the “Arabian.” As to the Norman himself,

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whatever of equine judgment he at a subsequent period possessed, he owed it to his intercourse with the French. Differently I would have you remember, that once in body-armour, once mounted on these heavy Neustrian horses, once the opportunity for movement again presented itself to him, the Norman—with his chesty primitive arrogance—cut a figure on the stage of this planet that few have rivalled. Rome in her Augustan days did not excel him in his swift intuition to embrace emergency. And in time he matched even her in his talent as an administrator. I suggest that this is high and ample praise. It contributes little to happiness, while evincing lack of shrewd understanding, to insist on the culture of the stone age.

One thing in conclusion, son. We have got to recognise the inconveniences attached to life. A man cannot unite the careers of a physician and undertaker; of a literary Merry Andrew and philosopher. If a cartoonist were to paint the most wonderful *Ecce Homo* the world had seen, the world would say "It was wonderful—for a cartoonist!" The Norman was magnificent and wonderful—for a Norman.

## THE MYSTERIE OF BELLS

“Where bells have knolled to church  
Let gentleness and strong enchantment be.”

—*Orlando. As you like it. Act ii. sc. vii.*

**B**Y way of prolegomenon—that well-sounding word which means a whisper in your ear before I begin to talk—I want to take you into my confidence, to say that everything has its uses, the value of flare to the statesman, of a late frost to lettuce, of its ceremonial grace to family life in China ; that charming country now suffering so greatly, where a young married woman never sings love-songs to her husband in the presence of her parents in law, where if a businessman finds it imperative to cut down expenses, he first dismisses his efficient clerks, because he knows that in this way the least suffering will be inflicted, that the efficient will be best able to rehabilitate themselves. Unusual heathens, are they not? Or are we, with our personal “slant” on salvation, the heathens?

In a manner it is similar with bells, the flare, the symbolism, the *uses* of them grow on you. The pursuit should, however, be followed *ad advisandum*, slowly, companionably, just blowing as it were on the drowsy coal. I am particular in giving this advice because, unless the passion of them be held in control, one is liable to go down under them—I have a specific

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instance in mind—as a man goes down who is stung by a hive of bees.

Though it was not until the end of the eleventh century that bells of any considerable size began to be made, they belong to a cast of great antiquity. From the Pentateuch we learn that already in those days the vestments of the high priests were overhung with them. This levitical association of bells has often got my head between my hands.

But bells have many other pleasant associations, bells of the sea, for example, and the bells which once upon a time it was customary to ring at railway termini before the departure of trains, a custom that had both distinction and merit. The blood, which up to then had been dripping through your body like cold rain, suddenly rushed to the head. The strain of that most trying of all forms of leave-taking relaxed. Husbands embraced their wives with new enthusiasm. Fathers slipped extra half-crowns into the palms of future commanders-in-chief, mitred bishops, presidents of banks, off to school. Cheery exhortations to departing grown-ups not to forget to write, and give my love to Bridget, Euphemia, Horace, filled the air. In the America of a generation ago, they had a delightful practice of ringing a great bell suspended above the boiler of the engine. As the train paraded down the principal streets of their cities, or drew up panting to let-down or take-up a passenger in the middle of the forest—or at some whistling-station on the prairie—wherever it was, the whole five notes of the glorious contraption, the strike note, the nominal, hum, tierce and quint, floated out on the air. It was

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not identical with having a solid background of exploration behind you, but you got the sensation of travel, of adventure out of it.

Bells take you to their dulcet hearts if you approach them with sympathy, familiarising yourself with their individual history, classifying them under their various headings and sub-headings. This classification may partake of the Civil Service method, but that must not be allowed to act as a deterrent. Classification can be great fun, and dealing with a subject like campanology, it puts a premium on high spirits. You realise that you have gotten something out of the top drawer. You react to the multiplicity even of its major divisions, metallurgical, hierocratic, harmonic, and the rest. You discover by enumeration that there are more different kinds of bells than there are bumps on a colony of horned toads, ship's bells, fire bells, sleigh-bells, the restful bells of the B.B.C., Bow Bells, the almost unreal wind-bells of China—with wings to their clappers—the gleaning bell which is still heard for twelve days during harvest-time at Deadham in Essex, that county of England in whose sunny villages the alphabet of so many old customs is still put together. Once upon a time there was the "sanctuary" bell, as there is still the sanctus bell, for which the French have so caressingly expressive a name.

The enumeration piles up, the pancake bell formerly rung on Shrove Tuesdays, for the last calling upon housewives to use up their dripping before the self-denials of Lent, bringing back that daylight which was in the sky when every home in the land



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was a little sunshine factory. The cover-fire or curfew bell, the jester's bell carried at the side and struck to call the attention of the Court, or passer-by, to the latest quip of the profession; just as that honourable story-teller, Kai-Lung, raised his voice and unrolled his mat to attract the distinguished-looking audience of loafers who made up his clientele. In our gardens there are harebells. There are even dumb-bells. And in Tennyson you will come across "wild bells," but bells have led poets down strange paths. The beautiful Vesper Bell originated in the belief that it was at the evening hour the Angel Gabriel saluted the Virgin, "Hail! the Lord is with thee."

I do not want to sound an unnecessary note of alarm, but sometimes the fear grows that even our ecclesiastical bells may go the way that the horse is so rapidly travelling. I am not sure that the increasing number of political levellers—those gentlemen with the ringtailed hats—are free from blame. At a recent vestry meeting the question of a new bell for the church coming up on the agenda, one of these gentlemen proposed instead they should get a buzzer. "A buzzer," said he, "could be connected up with the local electric plant. If any replacement was necessary at all, the cost of a buzzer came less and would carry further."

It does not appear open to doubt that it was through their association with the call to prayer, that "these small hollow globes of metal perforated and containing in them a solid ball"—Dr. Johnson's definition—first came to be used as a measure of time.

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As the day was divided by the mediæval church into canonical hours—matins, prime, tierce, sext, nones, vespers, complin—the Christian nations came naturally to mark the passage of time by bells. Bells “marked off mass from matins, separated sext, and called to complin.” In the Gaelic tongue you still inquire the hour of day by asking “What bell it is?” Strangely the church also used these “hollow globes” for cursing. Those who have made the pilgrimage to Tara and looked upon the site of that once royal city, should make the complementary journey to the British Museum, and see there the identical bell with which St. Ruan wrought its desolation.

There was much that was calm and serene about the Middle Ages, but much also that one would like to forget. Euphemisms are not all wrong. The *corpse bell*, like the *corpse mass*, was a crude tearing of jangled nerves. Only a few hours before, the “corpse” was a beloved wife or husband or child or parent. Thankfully, this savage, uncouth bruising of crushed reeds is not now done. Instead a “dead bell” is tolled, for bells are gentle things and have collected about them a ceremonial even of words. “To call the folks to church in time, they chime; when mirth and joy are on the wing, they ring; at the departure of the soul, they toll.” In Queen Elizabeth’s time, two bells at intervals were sounded for a man, for a woman as the nobler instrument, three.

Is this mediaeval world become a lost Atlantis? In England yes, but there are valleys in Hungary,

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in Italy, Bavaria, the Tyrol, in parts of France and Ireland, where bells are not yet rung backward, where the cadences of the "saint-bell," as it was once called, still ring to prayer, uniting a countryside in one remembrance, whispering to the heart as a soft night-wind whispers to the forest. In England there are men still gifted with miraculous power over a rope, but it is difficult to link their gift with the austerity of Revelation.

There is something I think about a campanaro or bell-founder of a piece with his bell. And—crown, shoulder, soundbow, tuned to the last vibration of tone and undertone—the work complete, the fires damped down, the stays unswathed, when dark-shining his bell rises from rim to cope in rounded beauty, he has given birth to something which is not stalemate, a living thing worthy to be blessed "with oil and with salt and with water."

The Turks—those indomitable but incomprehensible Ataturks—alone among the nations, ever set their faces against the use of bells. Lucien, in the second century, mentions a bell as being rung periodically by the flow of water in a clepsydra. Saint Patrick's bell, made of two pieces of bronzed sheet-iron fastened together by iron rivets, is, I regret to say, a much over-rated contrivance. But whether of bronze or silver or gold or iron, or even glass, it was not until the eleventh century that—the use of these instruments becoming general—the birth of the modern bell can be said to have taken place, a development we owe to the fervour of ecclesiastics. The art of bell-founding then sprang into existence.

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Men threw themselves into the mystery of its harmonics. To-day, bell metal, consisting of an amalgam of pure copper and tin, is run together at a temperature of some 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit, then poured off in a steady flow into the waiting mould. This mould is worthy of your notice. Place a large bowl, or a large thimble if you like it better, over a smaller one, and were the space between filled with a metal that would set, you have in rough austerity the principle upon which the bell-founder works. Next, when the black amalgam has cooled, it is sand-blasted to give it its silver-grey appearance. Last the tuner takes it in hand, bells now being tuned on the principle re-initiated by the ever-distinguished Canon Simpson, Rector of Fittleworth in Sussex, an almost miraculous art, giving a minor third, a perfect fifth, an octave above the strike note, with the hum note an octave below. For centuries this art of tuning the harmonics in a bell was lost. Now, by a process of shaving sufficient swarf from the interior, it is possible to tune a whole range of bells having an interval of five semitone octaves, in turn rendering possible the purity indispensable to the carillon.

Belgium is the land dominant of the carillon, England of bell-ringing. Others who go deeper into the nature of things may hold a different opinion, but as between a carillonneur and the ancient guild of bell-ringers, I am a torch-waver on the side of the latter. A carillonneur is a man of yesterday. He plays on bells that are set in rows just above the floor—where bells were never intended to be—using a contraption called a clavier. Bells high up in their belfries are

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*rung*, as time rings its changes in the belfry of eternity. There is tradition, legend, history, romance, imagination about them. Yet they have not been brought entirely under control. It has been calculated it would take ninety-one years to ring the possible changes on even twelve bells. They are a proud race, bell-ringers, and pride in craft justifies many things. If a veteran has served in the Guards and learned its "quiffs," you may not set him down for a common soldier of foot.

Stories—even fish stories—do actually happen, and sometimes repeat themselves. Not long ago I read of an incident linked up with the bells of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, that actually had befallen me. I was meeting in a city fairly remote from where I lived, a once well-known financial magnate. The citadel of Banking seemed then as it still seems, impregnable. The fate of an important syndicate depended to a considerable extent on my interview. Thus, among other things, I had been warned that when this gentleman so full of gold was uncertain of his ground, he was wont to envelop himself, not in a bluster of speech, but in a mail-coat of deafness. All my patience and skill to marshal facts would be tested. A day of festa and brisk air, it happened when we met that the bells of the city were pealing joyously. I thought it afforded a pleasant opening.

"Aren't those chimes fine in the fresh of the morning?" I said cheerily.

"What?" he cupped his hand behind his ear.



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"You are very fortunate," I said, "to have such lovely bells in your city."

"Eh!" he repeated.

Is there any other known minor adventure on which we embark more productive of sorrow for oneself?

"Aren't these beautiful chimes?" I now shouted into his ear.

"I cannot hear you, sir, for those damn bells," he looked me in the eye.

It was ominous, and in the end proved an omen.

There is one practice in regard to bells, much in vogue in Italy, which it is difficult to understand, that of clashing them, when the bells in perhaps a score of belfries will be rung all together, creating a din that might satisfy Hell's Commissioners. And yet perhaps there is sense to it. On the 11th November, 1918, all the bells of London were clashed and there was no discord. I was in France. But my wife shared in the unforgettable experience of that day. "The bells seemed to release, as nothing else could, the pent-up joy of the nine million people of that great city."

Who may translate into words the thoughts which a peal of bells, rung softly by a guild of trained ringers, has power to evoke? Probably the everlasting peace of impressionistic writing on bell-ringing, bells, and their emotional quality was knocked off by Victor Hugo, in his account taken from real life of Quasimodo, the hunchback bell-ringer of Notre Dame.

The re-creation of this strange creature—to whom the cathedral of Paris was home, society, world,

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universe, is among the most memorable in literature. "He dreamed of no other gardens but the stained windows ever in flower; no shade but that cast by the stone foliage spreading, full of birds, from the tufted capitals of the Roman pillars; no mountains but the colossal towers of the cathedral; no ocean but Paris roaring around their base."

And in all that fane he loved best those bells which had made him deaf. Amongst them he alone was master. He fondled them, caressed them, talked with them, understood them. In their society he tasted happiness. In time their voices were the only sound that he could hear. Favourites he had. Jacqueline he coquetted with for her silver tongue. But it was Marie, the great bell, who remained ever the real mistress of his soul.

"What words shall describe his delight on the days when the full peal was rung? The moment the archdeacon gave the word," that sinister Claude Frollo whom next to his bells the hunchback loved as only the deformed can love; that dark, *dangerous*, disdainful ecclesiastic who, jealousy decreed, was in the end to be hurled, by the hunchback himself, over the towering ridge of Notre Dame to his ignominious end—"the moment the word was given, Quasimodo was up the spiral staircase quicker than anyone else could come down." Then, the preliminary caresses of his mistresses over, he would call to his assitants, waiting below in the lower floor of the tower.

Softly the music of the first-appointed floated out. Then one and another of the great joy-makers would

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unite their voices to the trembling sound, until as the peal gained power the whole woodwork groaned from the foundations. At last Quasimodo, his eyes now blazing, would place himself in front of Marie, extending his ears to drink in the only sound that broke for him the universal silence, crouching down and alternately rising again at each return of her gaping maw, intoxicating himself with her quivering breath.

Suddenly, his expression growing strange, "waiting for the bell on its passage as a spider watches for the fly, he would fling himself headlong upon it. Then, suspended over the abyss, borne to and fro by the tremendous rush of the bell, he seized the brazen monster by its ears, pressed it between his knees, dug his heels into it, increasing by the shock and whole weight of his body the fury of the peal, till the tower rocked again. Meanwhile, shouting and gnashing his teeth, his red hair bristling, his chest heaving like a blacksmith's bellows, his eyes darting flames, his monstrous steed neighing and panting under him, it was no longer the great bell of Notre Dame or Quasimodo, it was a nightmare, a whirlwind, a tempest, Vertigo bestride of Clamour, a spirit clinging to a flying saddle, a strange centaur half-man, half-bell, a sort of horrible Astolphe carried off by a prodigious living Hippogriff of bronze."

## LAWYERS

“ Old father antic the Law.”

--*King Henry IV.*

APPLYING to the law the locution of St. Gregory Nazienzen, it may be said of it that it “ unites in an amiable knot all that the sun shines on in his course,” for a lawyer should be a man not necessarily learned, but on terms of easy acquaintance with learning. Above all he needs proficiency in the conceits and emotional subtleties of rhetoric. There can be no exception. Is not the honour of the regiment in the keeping of its humblest soldier? Certain at any rate it is, however the individual lawyer may be purled, that no other profession has served as an introduction to such high rewards. How far success vulgarises the individual is matter for different thought.

It may surprise that in a profession offering such opportunities for advancement and noble service there should be truants. In Germany it comes almost as a shock to be reminded that Bismarck is of the number. Indeed the truants of the world fill one of its most remarkable galleries. Consider a few of the names furnished by Medicine alone, commencing with Copernicus: Rabelais, Guillotin, Keats, Smollett, Marat, Mungo Park, Livingstone, W. G. Grace, Robert Bridges, Sun Yat Sen (first president of

China), Conan Doyle, Clemenceau, Oliver Wendell Holmes. And yet, returning to the law, to be a great and good judge surely should fulfil ambition.

“ When the ear heard him, then it blessed him ; and when the eye saw him, it gave witness. He put on righteousness, and it clothed him. To the blind he was eyes, to the lame feet. He plucked the spoil out of the jaws of the wicked.” To administer the law, executing its office well, attending only to the trepidations of the balance, never sophisticating the letter, never mis-interpreting the spirit, never differentiating between the owner of the vineyard and the labourer, is to deserve a seat at the right hand of the prince. This coming of the court near to the common people is part of the great responsibility of the good judge. “ I am not sure,” said Lord Justice Greer, “ that the best way of promotion on the bench would not be for a Judge to be appointed first to the House of Lords, and when he had learned his business there, he should be appointed to the Court of Appeal. Then having acquired proficiency in that sphere, he might be promoted to the King’s Bench or Chancery Division. And after all this experience, he would be fit to be a County Court Judge.”

Even on the lower deck—chasing the nimble civil-bill from his too often spidery office—the country attorney manages to surround himself with a certain aura, schooling himself against the honourable possibilities of such lesser preferment as may (in general) come within the aplomb and ambit of his more circumscribed ambitions. But, attorney or avocat, “ the lawyer ”—as one writer so acceptably puts it—



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“caring for none of those things that the disappointed litigant may utter, heedful only to keep the lists of tourney, has proved himself the lifeguard of our fortunes, wearing conscience as a crown, practising law so as not to forget the gospel.”

The law on the side of the seraphim, an uncommon handsome tribute! One's heart goes out to that conception. On the other hand, I cannot quite agree with the eminent dermatologist who, lecturing some months ago in Dublin, announced that “lawyers had washed the face of civilisation.” Even lawyers are not without wrinkles. “Even the great,” says Goethe, “cannot do their greatest work faultlessly.” You will be disappointed if you expect perfection either from a banc of judges or a house of bishops.

Perhaps the lawyer I liked best, of all those I ever met, hailed from New York City, a Mr. Ephraim Tutt, advocate of lost causes, and member of the famous brotherhood of piscators, “The sacred Camels of King Menelik.”

There is another thought which quickens our friendliness towards lawyers, that they are built to a pattern same like ourselves; preserved by the same grace of God from heaven-knows-what mazelike turnings; the same good fellows when off parade slipping a cog like any of us, for hoydens will be hoydens. Where is the man who has outlived the “roaring forties” who could not tick off a session of them, their vision blade-straight, all once so full of knightly suit and service, and now, alas!—judge and avocat, the whole of them—so cold, so utterly and hopelessly forgotten.

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But not everyone who follows the sea is called to be a hunter of the sperm whale. And for the law a university of gifts might still leave a man uncertain if he had wisely dedicated his life to its encysted temple. Yet the discovery made, that service in this withdrawn citadel leaves the spirit cold, how seldom does any chain of blessed circumstances lower its drawbridge for those who never belonged, enabling them to ride forth freemen into that different world which is theirs, the everglades of the *safari*; the bivouac and the soldier's blanket; the chase over that difficult country with its droughts and heats which men call letters, that quest in short of the enchanted blossom—service for service sake—the flowering of a life men dream might be theirs, but which only for the very fortunate ever comes true; for the truth amounts to this, the law is a jealous goddess, demanding of her priesthood a celibacy that only those impassioned in her service may yield.

And here at this point, if you will bear me company, the knowledge of your companionship will help me over some difficult thinking. Do you believe that this civilisation which we possess is the result of political planning? Or that outside of science and art, every privilege of civilisation that we enjoy is the result of military genius wedded to law—which in its pure form is the expression of the people's will—that intimate union of the public conscience with force, the recognition of which in Rome assigned to the leaders of the courts in time of peace, the command of the armies of the Republic when peace gave place.

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Surely, when a judge is clothed in modesty, surely to be a great judge, should fulfil ambition.

Is it not curious then that a profession so outstanding among the basal disciplines should have been so rung against? Consider the three constituent parts of the State—however imperfectly it functions—the legislative, interpretative, and executive. Each is concerned with the law. Yet strangely only that part engaged in interpretation, in safeguarding as best it can the liberties of the common people, has had to sustain continuous attack, the attempt to cover a whole body of men, as Job was covered, with boils. Old as the alphabet, time has not staled its pursuit. Open the pages of Dickens, Trollope, Sir Walter Scott. Witness Glossin (*Guy Mannering*), or that unsavoury villain of Warren's *Ten Thousand a Year*, Oily Gammon, who out-attorneys any in the whole gallery of Dickens. I make bold to say that there is no parallel for this obsession. Kings have lent ear to it. The learned have revelled in it. "Man, without law an impossibility;" says one quiet-stepping but famous Puritan, "without lawyers, is capable of infinite development." Even that dreamer, Plato, had only *aqua fortis* in stock for the forensic rhetorician. It is not arguable that this envenomed antagonism derives from any special greed of money, for the whole hierarchy of civilisation may also be discovered, princes, pressmen, even physicians, in chase of the same gold bezants.

Yet lawyers alone have been singled out for contumely. "Trueman never liked his vocation," attempts one wit, "whilst Skinall was mopped up in

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it.” “Crack the lawyer’s voice,” maledicts Timon, “that he may never more false title plead.” “The descendants of the devil by his second wife,” Sir Harry Polesworth describes them, “a breed without an honest bone in their bodies.” “A pox and a plague light on the lot of them,” inveighs Tom of Oxford, the bargeman. “Quillet swappers,” avers plain John Citizen, “that leave you in doubt whether they were ‘feed’ by you or by your arch-enemy.” The very holiest have not escaped this strange contagion. St. Denis, the Areopagite, says, speaking from inside, which is the more difficult to understand—for before his conversion he had occupied a seat on the Athenian bench—“The social outcast, even the blacksmith, shall be before them (lawyers) for his art is less black.” “Bred in inns,” says one writer—those stately Inns of Court which have rigged out the sleep of so many youthful Demosthenes with such sweet dreams; the noblest nurseries of humanity and liberty, as Ben Jonson called them—“bred in inns, stabled in courts, harnessed on benches, lawyers have dragged humanity at their tails as horses did ploughs until the reign of Queen Anne; for this pestiferous breed—eating its bread with honey—thrive only on the fomenting and fostering of animosities.” Doubtless an occasional shaft may at times penetrate a faulty joint, but what excuse can be offered for the perverted psalter, published in the time of Henry of Navarre, reciting that in the commencement the law begat deceit, deceit abundance, abundance pomp, pomp ambition, ambition dominance, and dominance the

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inkhorn of iniquity? Some have even gone so far as to suggest—a horrid suggestion—that the knees of the first lawyer were at the back of his legs.

No land or age has escaped. In the reign of Henry VI of England, so strong was this sentiment, that the king's writ excluded from Parliament every apprentice and man of law within the kingdom. Cade and Cromwell each debated their ejection from the commonwealth. Even the early American colonists, resolved that they would not be outdone, declared—in making the practice of the law for reward illegal—"that the very bee hath not escaped the wickedness of these servants of Baal, for from his fundament they hath extracted its wax, to seal those Deeds where-with, using the innocent skin of a lamb, they have non-suited humanity." Of a truth the most enlightened citizens have surrendered themselves to this disorder. "If there be any instance," says Junius, "as some there are undoubtedly of genius and morality united in a lawyer, they are distinguished by their singularity and operate as an exception."

Yet one authentic explanation of this phenomenon is available. The lawyer has had to bear the odium for the ruthlessness of the statute law he was called on to administer. How often has the minister of a worthless prince not had to pay the penalty for his master's misdeeds? There is a lot of slobbering over the secular side of the mediæval world, those five centuries following the rise of the Holy Roman Empire. The modern lass with her mastery over the cigarette, her compactum and carmine nail-wave may not represent the millennium, but were the



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common people any better off during those centuries when they were rated as " penceless ribauds " ; when they had to labour upon my lord's broad acres on the fair days, and till their own yardland in the rain ; when failure to attend the very Sunday Mass added another penalty to their multitudinous fines ? The principles of Equity are immutable. But the mediæval world buried them under the statutory enactments of its lords and venal senators. Mediævalism was ruled by men bold and formidably-capable as they were flint-hearted and relentlessly-unprincipled, who—buying salvation with their legalised booty—hammered the law into an instrument to enforce their turbulently-iniquitous privileges. I cannot find adverbs sufficiently expressive. For centuries the statute books of the known world were loaded with Acts which were not the acts of the apostles. The very guilds that we hear so much about were mere entrenchments of execrably-exclusive crafts having their birth in a similar abnegation of justice and brotherhood.

The law, said Coke, ancestor of the earls of Leicester—one of those lawyers, " rags of honour " like Norbury, who has helped to feed this cult—the law, he avers, writing from his seat in Norfolk, " is the mother of quiet and repose." And assuredly his description was long justified. If you were not an earth-owner the law ended your worries. How did the grovelling methodical brain of the Lincolnshire farmer express it ? " Dosn't thou 'ear my 'erse's legs as they canters away ? . . . Proputty, proputty, proputty, that's what I 'ears 'em saay." A different gospel was preached from the world's pulpits, but

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property was the key that opened both an earthly and heavenly paradise, and down almost to the beginning of the nineteenth century the larceny of property to greater value than one shilling was punishable with death. Yesterday, with property become the toss-ball of fictitiously controlled paper-money, when we regiment and arm the propertyless masses to maintain our earth-ownership, is our interpretation of Christianity much different? "There was a man sent from God whose name was John," but his mission does not seem to have been attended with much success.

Said Judge Willis in 1746—ambitious to appear strong and impressive—filling the birket of legal wisdom with another freshet, "Mighty indeed is the law and nothing shall prevail against it." So in the neighbourhood of that year the Marquis de Mirabeau records, that he had seen a tax-gathering bailiff chop off the wrist of a poor woman who clung to her last saucepan. But why go to France? Writing in Ireland—where woodcock are more valuable than men—Ireland naturally looms up before one. I do not subscribe to the doctrine, that at the roll-call of the Seven Deadly Sins the reply of my country will be "Absent." How could I? A letter of last year's date lies before me from one of our best beloved soggarths, a letter telling how he had striven to defend his poor people, from whom *the last horse, the last cow, the last jennet*, had been seized to support "a kingdom and a throne" around which it would be difficult to find the rainbow.

Hanging, quartering, disembowelling, roasting

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alive, boiling in oil, pouring molten lead into wounds—it presents a frowning coast, this mother of quiet and repose. “Unless the principle of justice underlie the law,” said Wilfred Blunt, “the law itself is a crime.”

But why, in the name of the six thousand beards of Athos! blame the executioner for the death sentence? If the Army Book requires certain things done, the officer may not question the regulations of his service. Were these *servientes ad legem* to heat empty ovens because the sophists had given them a bad logos, because Greed had built a city wherein were manholes, from which if you lifted the lid you gave back hastily?

Even in the *macabre* this elder daughter of the Devil, the statute-law, was not to be outdone. In the time of the Bruce, the body of Roger de Mowbray being exhumed was placed upon trial before a harassed and helpless Court, and being convicted, was ordered to be subjected to indignities about which the less said the better. Truly lawyers might cry with Jeremiah, “Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard.” Incredible as it sounds to us amidst our sophistications—whether Christ was *conflatus*, or *commixtus*, or *geminatus*—it was not until the middle of the last century that the French code was purified of the trial of animals. But the law went further than beasts. At Basle—the seat to-day of the Bank of Banks—a farmyard cock was indicted and tried for magic for having laid an egg! It is not recorded whether the ritual of a “dissenting judgment” was gone through, for the strain upon men of integrity was so tremendous that the Courts

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themselves had sunk under it. Yet is the so-often seemingly-iniquitous subservience of lawyers not susceptible of wholly different interpretation? Said Ulysses S. Grant, of the American Courts: "No method appeared to them as effectual to secure the repeal of bad or obnoxious laws, as their strict construction." But for a thousand years and beyond, injustice, not justice, has been the blind companion of the law, and, unless we are to cast abominable doubt on the exponents of moral philosophy, the statute-books of the world (including these twenty-six counties) still carry ten thousand ass-loads of laws, that should be burned by the public hangman at the foot of the grand staircase.

How splendid then that down the centuries so many of the *ministri* of this ancient calling have not feared to maintain, not in words but deeds, that they had no knowledge of Cæsar and Octavia as against Brutus; have not trembled to repudiate that their concern was with business only, not bosoms.

Passing to another consideration, whether court wit is not *alterum generis*! I am not thinking of Curran's sarcasm, that court wit is like a contingent remainder without a particular estate to support it. If a jest's prosperity lies in the ears of those who hear it, if gowned and bewigged laughter were an index, court wit should be as famous as the honey of Hymettus. Perhaps a partisan of humour, I am prejudiced against all forms of wit. I have often wondered if witty persons were not cruel even to animals. But the true objection to Court wit (as so many opinion) is differently founded. Wit in a house

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of gravity—so often tragedy—is like laughter in a house of death. To the plain citizen, wanting the fundamental equities enthroned in austerity, a temple of law, with its uncertainties and ruthlessly expensive machinery, is separated a hundred days' journey from a temple of vaudeville and verbal harlequinade. I am not expecting immediate repentance as the result of this fulmination. I hurl the spear. Jove directs the blow.

On the position of lawyers in society much has been written. They have been set down as Banquos at the feast. The law may train a man in the plastic resources of language, but it does not excel in opening the casements of his mind. Men who speak well only the vocabulary of their pursuit find themselves so easily out-of-reach. On the other hand, the "Blazon of Gentry" discloses that from a remote period lawyers have ranked as gentlemen.

In earlier centuries this matter of rank was not the fragmentary thing it is to-day. Rouge Dragon, Rouge Croix, Portcullis, and Blue Mantle, ruled the land. So recently indeed as the reign of Edward IV—when the first rumblings of the Reformation were audible—for a yeoman to ape even the dress of his betters "by putting bolsters or stuffing under his apparel" was made a criminal offence. Lawyers, however, had their definite place. In Lower's "Heraldry" their social standing is placed beyond question. There they are ranked seventh or last in the class Esquire, being—I give the quotation—"generous by virtue of their calling, like ceorls made . . . *scilicet*, persons who can live idly, without



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manual labour." Judges, however, were accorded higher rank, in the sixth class, "with the illegitimate sons of perfect gentlemen." Whether the word 'judge' included functionaries such as magistrates, R.M.'s and District Justices I cannot say. But is not the test of William of Wykeham—"Manners makyth man"—more conformable to reason, as well as simpler? You do not really believe in your heart that it is the poor and the harlots whom the wolves will be after on the day of Judgment.

I have tried to hold the scales evenly. Blasphemers do not make pleasant company. And those who have blasphemed are so many. Even Hazlitt, joining in the hue-and-cry, dismisses lawyers "as men who talk nothing but *double entendre*." What language is this? No wonder that the learned author of the *Religio Medici* cried out, "I had rather stand the shock of a Basilisco than the fury of a merciless pen."

Whatever a man's avocation in this carnal life, if his transgressions do not reach the zymotic, he has no cause to blush. As to manners, individuals like Old Tulkinghorn, the family lawyer of the Deadlocks, may not engage the affections. But turning from such blanketers of serenity to one of the joyous reminiscences of this ancient profession—a reminiscence incidentally concerned with manners—was it not that light of Scottish jurisprudence, Lord Monboddo, who declared to Johnson that "he set a higher value on the history of manners than on any other history"? And did not the illustrious lexicographer and historian of the Poets in turn confess, that Monboddo was distinguished not only for his

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ancient metaphysics, but for his ancient *politesse*,  
“and that he would not mind going to the expense  
and trouble, at any time, of travelling two miles for  
the pleasure of his company.”

## TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER.

“A Child of our grandmother Eve, a female; or,  
for thy more sweet understanding, a woman.”

—*Love's Labour's Lost.*

YOUR letter about our young friend George has definitely excited me. It is not easy to re-shape this surprisingly awkward planet. But had this boy been satisfied to remain a laboratory physician, I have not a doubt he would have scaled another aiguille of the great peaks of medical research. And how filled with gratitude and humility we should be when the names of the illustrious alleviators are gone over, the inscrutable Pasteur and his crystals, the retiring Jenner and his vaccine, the amazing Coch, father of bacteriology; the grave Bernard, founder of experimental physiology; the aristocratic Lister, creator of antiseptic surgery. Nevertheless, pursuing at Thorn, *your* Thorn, the tumult of the great harmonists, I must write George, congratulating him. I love everything about sweet music except the snake-like contortions to which it subjects the mouths of singers.

No, his mother is no longer with the à Becketts. The place is closed. My dear Nicodemus, I agree with a good deal of what you say about these old country places. I will tell you what I think about them presently, when I come to the English lawyer whom I met in Scotland. Just here I want to set

afloat this rose petal on the brimming cup of graces that belong to George's mother, to whom this boy owes his inherited gifts. I remember her since she was a slip of a girl. Then there was only one Sabina, the fairest maid in five townlands. Afterwards there were two; one, among the last upholders of a great tradition; the other, known only to those whom she honours with her friendship.

Perhaps to your fuller understanding of the whole marvel of this lovable woman I should strike for you a more personal note. Emotion to a man is an incident; it is woman's whole existence. For long then, because she is naturally frank and outspoken, I had no notion that Sabina deep down in her heart nursed a secret fear. When I did receive her confidence, I somehow got the impression that no argument could ward off the darkness which seemed to be closing around her. Married when seventeen to George's father, perhaps because he was so many years her senior, he had made her a perfect husband, and her brief married life with him had been uneventfully if unemotionally happy. So as the years went on, wedlock glimmered before her like a marsh light, promising dry fragrant ground under her feet if only she could reach it. That a woman of her embellishments, so richly endowed with those little weaknesses of the sex which have such a pull on us, should ever have had uneasiness on this score may seem strange. But the explanation of her uneasiness, when it came to my knowledge, was simple enough. It is not an uncommon experience. Before she was five years a widow she had concentrated definitely on Ralph

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Tormey, old Subella Lady Mawley's butler, and as she once said to me, "Tormey"—a familiar type enough in rural Ireland—"she sometimes thought wasn't of any gender."

I can assure you there are a deal of mysterious processes that go into the making of each of us. Often we emerge, pontifically to fill the most unexpected roles, and it is better often, except through the fairy tales we tell, that none should know how we came to emerge. Life, by which just here I mean fortune and environment, is a varied and cunning welder, and in Sabina's case, outside her official duties as housekeeper at the Glen—Sir Fergus à Beckett's place—it had welded her immortal and mortal parts into a perfect woman, just as her father, old Mosey White, once welded its upper and nether leathers into a perfect boot. Materially I had watched the young village beauty expand into a seductive fortress of the flesh, seen the straight lines of Euclid describe circles. Spiritually—for though she thickened in the hips she never thickened in the wits—spiritually with the aid of the refined poets she had been brought to bed of her soul. It was a remarkable family and, to complete her evolution, the daughter of a Jacobin shoemaker, in process of time she, too, had pontifically bourgeoned—if a bulwark can be said to bourgeon—into a bulwark of the nobility; one of that once puissant race of feudal retainers which is so surely passing, which strangely has been so inadequately delineated at least in English literature. Not a character makes the grade. Mrs. Rouncewell does communicate atmosphere—a some-



## TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER—I

thing of its authentic faiths and self-correspondent philosophies—to Chesney Wold, but it is an atmosphere difficult to breathe. Others, take Mrs. Reynolds, Darcy's housekeeper in "Pride and Prejudice." What can be said for Mrs. Reynolds, droning the subjects of the pictures, the dimensions of the rooms, the price of the furniture? Mrs. Blenkinsop and the Sealys' housekeeper in "Vanity Fair" are equally dispiriting. Some picture they present to the mind. They present none to our hearts.

Which brings me to the one subject, tradition, on which we have never agreed. You say tradition cannot survive modernism; that when pleasure and greed fills the sails, the cargo of the vessel, whatever the pennant it carries, is Sin; that the devil is no longer seeking whom he may devour; that the repast is spread for him. I demur, and will also have a word to say about sin. I believe tradition to be indestructible, the tradition of home, family, race, virtue, beauty, of old and cherished custom.

Even the tradition of exclusiveness—of life within a sheltered atmosphere—holds a message for us of wine-dark ordered beauty. I am not defending the College of Arms. Neither do I suggest that the brain of Democracy envisages a society where the richer class would not have power to shield themselves. That would not suit at all at all. The common people must remember their place. Besides someone has to work. It is a poor player, Democracy. When I kept geese I would not have killed the worst pair in my flock to celebrate one achievement of it,

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although its "backs, and half-backs, and forwards"—who annex to themselves the royal "we"—may, like the negro, believe that they too will rise up white at the Resurrection.

I wish, dear Nick, I could get you to worship with me at the shrine of tradition, in particular at the shrine of that old Scottish tradition of clanship, that passionate expression of the individual to raise by the simple integrity of his life the honour of his family, his clan, his country, to the highest common denominator. Of course I recognise that other or individual heirship, the naturalness that our chest should expand, the blood warm, when we are able to trace ourselves back to Baldwin the tailor (of the time of Rufus), to Jan Huss or Nell Gywnne, when one of our ancestors has reflected distinction on his or her profession or country.

Sabina may not have given much attention to the College of Arms. But she had one infallible test whether you belonged, the test of names. When she heard the names and saw some of the people who now drove up in their automobiles to the Glen—the Glen with its slumbering lawns and white peacocks—she was glad Sir Alan was dead. "I hope I know my place, Mr. Davidson," she said to me. "I am the servant of any guest of Sir Fergus and Miss Joan, but some of the things I see happening leaves me like a bird that's lost a wing."

Sabina I think was both right and wrong. The manners of an older school may be in the hands of the Receiver, but such is the power of tradition that in time it wears away to its taboos even the *opiniâtraté*

TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER—I of the newest Jack-amend-all. No doubt it will not be the same world. The à Becketts, those "chasseurs de points de vue"—that world like a rose on a stem—will be gone never to return. Yet the inherent strength of tradition is indestructible. Indeed this strength is but imperfectly understood. Conceivably it might be best not to try to understand it. Mere understanding, as de Quincy pointed out, is the meanest faculty and the most to be distrusted. I do not understand the mystery of the Trinity, or in a different sense the miracle of sin; for let me inform you, *amico mio*, that if sin were successfully banished from the world the very morning paper on your breakfast table would vanish. Save advertisements, the *tedia* of sport, and accidental disasters, its entire selling assets would be run off.

There is nothing intellectually complicated about this conception. Doctors would survive, but lawyers might dispose of the Inns of Court for the best price they would bring. Rhetoric, all the joyous humbug behind argument, would be over. It is questionable if all religions would not have to close their doors. The very Commandments would be obsolescent. Even that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom would forsake sense. Your quick mind will supply a score of consequences that I omit. Virtue enthroned, history would become a chronicle of dates, the cinema a panorama of nature, the theatre a place of exercise for marionettes. Every intriguing avenue of life in this old tipsy world would be closed; every scandal or disreputable pursuit of which we gleaned

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the last detail would be finished ; not a " picker " would be left in the antique business, not a face-decorator in the beauty-parlour profession. In a sinless world even Jack Horner would disappear from our nurseries. I am not certain that the faculty of laughter would not perish. Gradually we would, I think, become pig-eyed. We would have purchased virtue at the price of innocence.

But do not allow yourself to be alarmed. There is no fear that sin will ever be " on the red." When you hear a man declare that he fears no one but his God, that God knows he has fulfilled his obligations to the brother within the limits allowed by his responsibilities, my worthless advice to you is to leave him to God. He is of the one breed with that insect, the " praying mantis," which assumes a pose of devotional rapture to hypnotise the victim he intends to devour. Keep clear of him, as you would of the deadly *fer-de-lance* of the West Indies, if you ever visit those enchanted islands. It is in a sense a disturbing reflection, that for all the progress the learned doctors of Virtue have made during the last few thousand years, they might as well have been preaching to Totem Posts. It is the perfect triumph of hope over experience ; or the most successful pursuit ever followed, if you regard it differently. And yet these great Doctors have been the most notable contributors to human happiness.

Sabina's investment in Raymond Humphreys, George's father, might not be regarded as gilt-edged. But, a retired barony cess-collector in the mid-forties, Raymond had come in attractive guise, and

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still in her teens she had taken him at his own valuation. Dead within a year, she found herself in possession of George and about forty pounds, the amount realised by the furniture. Raymond's pension died with him. In this predicament she coshered the boy and installed herself as second housemaid at the Glen.

Skip twenty-six or twenty-seven years now. They skip pretty fast. You remember Sabina's weakness for Ralph Tormey, old Subella Lady Mawley's butler. Well, her final plans to enmesh Ralph were not involved. She proposed to get him out of Greenlands, the Mawleys' place, and into the Glen, planking on propinquity to do the rest; for Greenlands, too, had been witnessing changes. And those changes! in your high position it is not easy to appraise the advantages which one in my lesser station enjoys. You see we have no oodles of cash, no exhausting brainy problems of state or morals to fash about. There is time to weed, earth, advance, now the growth of Mirth, now the Middle Justice. Leisure then enables me to present for you, in geometrical perspective, these Big Georgian Houses—the Glen, Greenlands, and the rest—around which Sabina's allegiance centred, to present them as it may be they have not ever anywhere been presented.

Dr. Oliver St. John Gogarty, of Dublin, tells that the gracious life of these *estancias*, with their "decorum and worth," has gone for ever from Ireland. But apart from the danger inherent in generalisation, surely this gentleman is as unhappy in so saying as he would appear to be in the first



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portion of his otherwise attractive name; for was there not an Oliver St. John, Deputy of Ireland, whose record of misgovernment was too much even for James I?

I feel I am now being borne forward on the crest of my adventure. In a world, so many of whose rulers are submerged in the impure—whose twin gods are hedonism and lucre—whatever may have been their shortcomings, we incline to look back to older forms of government, to the aristocratic oligarchies of the France of Bayard and Gaston de Foix; the America of the Virginians of George Washington, that rule not created by this Bayard of the New World out of attachment for the motley crew of northern adventurers and “ditchers” for whom we are asked to believe he unsheathed the sword, but created out of the loyalties and ideals of his own spirit, and which he believed with the great bounty of the land behind him that he could make permanent; that world of different values, of slow movement, candlelight, individual craftsmanship, homely virtue, golden hours, and in its loftier circles of great gentlemen.

But the Big Houses of Ireland were never of this company. They could not be, for the foundations of them had been laid, the existence of them perpetuated, in injustice. I cannot recall where history furnishes such another flagrancy. Let me set before you a picture of the Ireland from which the revenue of those Houses, with their “decorum and worth,” was wholly drawn.

“Before God and my country,” said Lord Moira

TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER—I in the House of Lords in 1797, “I speak of what I have seen myself. I have seen in Ireland such tyranny as no nation ever groaned under. I have seen the most wanton insults and grievous oppressions practised upon all ranks in a country as free from disturbance as this city of London. Thirty houses are sometimes burned on a single night. To more aggravated facts I am prepared to testify before the Privy Council at your lordship’s bar.”

And here is a second picture made for us by that good man, the Reverend Ryland, Rector of Dungarvan, in Decies (his *History of Waterford*, 1824, pp. 381-5). “The Irish peasant labours under all the disadvantages of a foreigner. Generous, hospitable, high-minded, he has been degraded into the lowest scale of humanity. It may appear paradoxical, but it is nevertheless true, that the slaves of the coast of Africa were better attended to than the miserable *freemen* of this country. Their privations and wretchedness have been depicted even to loathing, and yet the picture has not been overcharged.” Small degree there to achieve decorum. Yet it was the toil for sixteen hours a day of this rent-devastated, outlawed peasantry, which built and paid for those Houses. Are these pictures of the men who begat them, lost to-day on their descendants in Merrion Street and Leinster House, with their ambition to impale crowns on their coaches.

They were not chaste in their flaming days, those Big Houses in this British Isle as it then was, and as, no doubt correctly, we are daily informed by the B.B.C. it still is. Yet time with its healing was to

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soften away much of the suffering they inflicted. A new life with new marvellous opportunities was opening before these houses. Nor were all of them at any time inhabited by the noisy, intellectually-impoverished, hard-riding, hard-living men and women of Mesdames Somerville and Ross, and later as well as earlier reconstructors. Some were, and still are, inhabited by men and women, who in and by their sweet alertness, their wide sympathies, their simple frankness and love of nature, their whole quiet mastery of the art of living, imparted and still impart meaning to the words 'lady' and 'gentleman.'

This to lead to what that eminent—though labourers in the vineyard of Social Credit may not endorse my 'eminent'—to what that eminent financial baronet from Decies has had to say recently about these big houses of Inver, with their inhabitants—fitted mostly for little beside the frolic of a May-game. "It would be an interesting task," he writes in the *Sunday Times*, "for some post-graduate student to present graphically the changes within the last fifty years, in order to show how many country homes (in Ireland) have become economic prisons for the poorer landed gentry, how many are still occupied by the old families, how many have become religious institutions, how many are now mere farms, and how many are actually derelict."

My point is that the inquiry would put on record the details of a phenomenon, the silent passing of a whole ruling caste out of the life of a nation. The wise man does not pull against the current. The

TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER—I owners of these “Gentry Houses”—as they call them in Scotland—for long enjoyed the privilege to receive the adoption of sons ; to rise to their astonishing opportunity of championing the cause of a nation stripped, by the Treaty of Limerick, of almost every one of its Gaelic and Gaelic-Norman aristocrats whose house and lineage had in historic memory ever really counted in the story of this land.

Now 170 years run their course from the date of that Treaty. The famines have done their work. In the amelioration of Time another era is dawning, and in that dawning, it is not once that the successors of the Cromwellian and other soldiery and “undertakers”—the owners of these new gentry-houses—were besought not to allow the wine of life to ferment in their cellars ; besought to marry over the midden, as they say in Scotland, and not over the moor. Alas ! And when I say alas I mean it with all the strength of my soul, for no country can afford to dispense with an aristocracy bone of its bone ; and Ireland to-day is the only land in the round of this earth without that leaven and what it represents for the progress, the greatness, the nobility, the destiny of the State. Alas, that these so exceptionally-placed men and women—instead of seizing opportunity with both hands, instead of manning the argosy that had borne them all the riches that they ever had, instead of entering into the new amazing dukedom that awaited them, instead of national faith with works, instead of a long, honoured and happy existence—should have doomed themselves to *ouvrages perdus*, models for

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the goods of cosmetic compounders, art *in obscuro*, toy commercialism, "Jubilee" nursing activities; roping in on these activities a weirdly-composed nondescript following; should have made of their homes, when not "economic prisons," the sheltering places of wraiths, contributing to their country instead of service, foofaraw! books among the rest such as the *Experiences of an Irish R.M.*, shallow attempts in a bastard lingo, to ridicule a "generous, hospitable, high-minded" people.

Do I speak daggers though I use none? I mean not to. Only that the state of man suffers a form of insurrection at all sorrows. More than once the notion has lingered with me, that a real book could be built around the comedy and tattered tragedy of statecraft in this island, from Elizabeth to George VI. By real I mean withering as a beleaguered city is withered, without direct assault, a book putting these houses in their exact perspective as part of a larger tragedy.

There are two schools of thought, and only two, which have reality with present-day Ireland; one which demands that the creation and control of money shall be taken out of the hands of the descendants of the inventors of *banking*—"the world's greatest steal"—and shall reside in the people who create *wealth*; that tangible wealth whose production and distribution it is the sole office of money to facilitate. And the other, (including a section of our daily press), which denies this right to the people as being inconsistent with the vested interests; in other words, a choice between the balanced adjustment of currency

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## TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER—I

to production, and the bankers' adjustment of production—with all its human suffering—to *their* controlled currency. Dear Friend, as you are a man of unblemished honour, as you value the survival of a cherished, time-tested people and civilisation, I beg you will ponder to which of these alternatives your loyalty is due.

Embattled within an enceinte of spacious beauty—tradition's greatest gift—places of refreshment to the spirit, these houses might have enshrined themselves, still in their owners' hands, as among the nation's priceless possessions. I am not thinking now of their once antlered interiors, of their now faded furniture, faces, minds; rather in the circumstances of this modern world, of their irreplaceable exteriors. Every Lord of Stillness and Woodland-Noise in a few of them, one in north Wexford, a couple elsewhere, has been at different times my confidant. Shedding for once my diffidence, I can speak for these three and for one other, not ten miles from the great linen city of the north, where as a boy, come winter or summer, every secret tiding that it told of undiluted joy was mine; every monarch tree that it possessed known to me as I knew the swans on its ornamental water.

Do you believe the loss of these havens of beauty is matter of indifference? Now, in this part of Ireland at least poppies cover them; poppies for forgetfulness, poppies the blood-red opiate of the world. Their going had to be, for the rights of a people—not its sections, farming, industrial or leisured—must in the end prevail. But their loss as the potential

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homes of a *real* aristocracy is not less real. Nor does the change of so many of these houses to religious institutions offer a substitute. The maypole flourished not within the clerestory, but on the village green. Religious foundations are centres, some of enlightenment, some of noble missionary effort, all of liturgical beauty, but from birth they are calced. They provide no alternative to what a resident gentry—mens et animus et consilium et sententia populi—mean to a nation. They lack the stately grace of family life, its caballeros, donas, danzellitas ; its blending of mirth with sedate ceremony. They lack the power either to vivify themselves or the countryside in which they are mutiplying. Gentle or simple, “to make a happy fireside clime for weans and wife, that’s the true pathos and sublime of human life.”

### PART II.

I PROMISED you that I would take on board a certain English lawyer, because the comprehensibleness running through his views on our country helps to explain the insolvency of these Houses ; how they became an anomaly within an anomaly, a word I borrow from this gentleman. Squat down then for another ten minutes. He is of the type who does not shake your hand, as if your acquaintance had been the yearning desire of his life ; one of the few men were he dead, around whom I would light a score of tapers. A sweet even timbre to his speaking voice, from childhood enjoying coyne and livery of fortune, he had that intensely human outlook which a first

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easy approach to life and manhood so surely gives, when men correspond with their endowments. So however you might dissent from his opinions, you could not withhold delight from the unforced serenity, the brow of knowledge, the quiet concentration, behind them. When we first met he was engaged in climbing, within the limits of a month, as many as he could manage of the lesser elevations of Scotland, from the "Cobbler" of loch Long to the "Sutors" of Cromarty.

We discussed his home country, England, and he invited candour. We discussed Ireland, and although he had never been there he might have been reared in and never left it. But he did not approach it with challenge to me, as I had once been challenged by a Norfolk squire, "if we were still living on our sweepstakes"? Instead he asked if I were familiar with the dilemma of Euthalus?

I said not.

"Euthalus," he informed me, "engaged a lawyer, one Protagoras, to teach him the art of pleading, the first moiety of the agreed reward to be paid in hand, the other when the pupil gained his first case. When, after a short time, Protagoras proposed to sue for the second moiety, he faced his pupil with this dilemma. The cause must be decided either in my favour or yours. If it is decided in my favour, the sum will be due to me according to the sentence of the judge; if in your favour I still gain, because it will then be due according to our contract.

"Euthalus retorted the dilemma. But the race of political men which you have raised in Ireland, since

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the Treaty, will not retort the dilemma in which your people discover themselves.

“ There is no enigma about your country. Its geographical, strategical position demands it shall be held—if it can be held, as I believe it can—economically servient to England. That plain fact being recognised, your people were bound to lose by what they have gained. I mean the plain people have lost. They are saddled with the expense of an ineffectual political machine, while stripped of the social advantages that unity with England would have given them. As time goes on there will be a living for less and less of them. Their position and prospects are worsened and will continue to worsen. It is inevitable. But perhaps there has been always something anomalous about Ireland, only to-day it is more pronounced. Take heed of the incredible anomaly with which the plain people of your country to-day are menaced ; from which, if it materialise, they will find no shelter economically, politically or culturally ; the threat of a rampant, powerfully-organised, merciless oligarchy of reactionaries, of a new type of land-owner which you seem to have bred, the “ half-gentleman ” farmer masquerading as Sir Baron, with only one purpose to his life, rapacity ; whose attitude even to your wasted population is not “ increase and multiply,” but decrease and stultify. Believe me Sir you have exchanged an unworried existence under later British rule for a chameleon-hued servitude, each imaginable stage of it worse for the common or vast majority of your people than the preceding. Your politicians have got you political

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independence, the shadow ; without economic independence, the substance.

“ Do not misunderstand me. On paper, both political and economic freedom are yours. But my country had no uneasiness in granting you that paper freedom. All empires rest on prevision. A hundred years ago, against the very contingency which arose in 1921, steps had been taken to alter your land system, converting it to pasture from tillage ; steps that in the events which have happened would leave you dependent on England for the sale of your pastoral products. Thus at her will to-day, your politicians must comply with whatever measures she considers necessary to enforce her position as the dominant tenement, or face the reactionary menace of those ranchers to whom I have referred. Seemingly rather ominous alternatives for you, are they not ? But I think I will be able to justify England’s policy presently.

“ Possibly if your politicians ceased their ‘ bickers ’—as they say here in Scotland—they could retort this dilemma, could extricate their country and the common people, but it would involve sacrifices and, in their present divided position, dangers to themselves, that we in Britain know they will neither face nor advise. In any case this modern age—at least among the democracies—does not want sacrifice. What is the upshot ? These gentlemen are driven to apply to government the legal doctrine of *cy-près*, a thing you cannot do. They are driven to alternatives for government, risky peat extraction, the expansion of a highly questionable tourist traffic, the heating



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(with imported raw material and machinery) of an artificial industrialism, the uneconomic cultivation of wheat, though wheat grown even on a small scale could still be made economic, if the aim of the State went beyond mere acreage to *yield*. I am very sorry for these gentlemen, as indeed if the truth were known I am sure they are sorry for themselves. Whatever of Machiavelli, statesmanship and politics are not necessarily dishonourable pursuits. But one thing good government is not. It is not a temple over the roof of which you just fly political kites, before the altar of which you burn acts of parliament, commissions, reports. It is a powerhouse, with its captain high up on its bridge above its glistening creative machinery.

“ You may regard all this as a calamity. I wish I could get you to look at it differently. Your country and mine were intended by Providence to form one economic unit. A unit not a *Zollverein*, as power to determine policy must reside with England, the greater partner. As Euclid demonstrates, the lesser cannot be equal to the greater. But what reason have you for apprehension from such unity? The king in *Henry VI* says, ‘ What danger or what sorrow can befall you as long as Edward is thy constant friend? ’ All the troubles of Ireland have originated in misguided resistance to this natural unity. England would be, and is to-day your best friend and only customer. She takes your surplus population off your hands, a surplus that would soon swamp your government if not thus provided for. Remove your childish tariffs, and her industrial organisation can cut

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your present high cost of living almost in half. You speak and think in her language, a language with a superb literature. In time of danger she is your one tower of strength. If I may presume to advise, your urgent need is to end the unnatural Partition of our countries, to return to pre-treaty conditions, keeping a parliament if you like for local government, for the care of roads, public health, court appointments, police. End Partition. Return to Westminster and you will be doing well. *Contra*. Every movement which tends to separate our two countries is evil."

He had ended on a note that thrilled me.

"Have you ever heard of a poet named Denis Florence MacCarthy?" said I.

He said not.

"Because I recall a few lines from one of his pieces, *Cease to do evil—learn to do well*. Myself I am interested in the things of the spirit, and the bread and butter without which the spirit languishes. I am not politically-minded. To be politically-minded is death. But you quoted the king, Edward IV, in *Henry VI*. Have you forgotten what the king-maker, Warwick, said to him? 'I have degraded you from being king, and come now to make you Duke of York.' The Irish people may fear they, too, might be degraded, that England is the island which dyes black white. They may prefer to rely on their own kingship, even though for a while they suffer from its inexpert pressures. Recall America. The English law of 1763—*declaring void the currency of the colonies*—ended in the war of Independence. But not until after the second war with England in

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1812 did they achieve anything more than a cuckold status. The history of America during those years provides an absorbing study. Her coffers were empty, her internal revenue laws defied, no sooner had she won her political liberty than she found her trade besieged, her very seamen impressed from American ships by the British Admiralty. From crown to bricket she found herself split, by English *agents provocateurs*, into British Federalists and Republicans with their tricolour cockades. But that example does not go far enough. There is another view. The view which this piece I mention embodies, a sentiment that is older than Magna Carta, one that neither you nor I have power to alter. Whether anything, or any government, good or bad, native or foreign, could alter a sentiment going down under the roots of race I do not know. May I recite the lines? "

He cordially invited me to do so.

If thou hast seen thy country's quick decay,  
And, like a prophet, raised thy saving hand,  
And pointed out the only certain way  
To stop the plague that ravaged o'er the land!  
Repent! remember how the hosts of Satan fell,  
Cease to do evil—learn to do well.

Cease to do evil—ay! ye madmen, cease!  
Make with your foes a foul and fateful peace:  
Cease to love Ireland—cease to serve her well,  
And quick will ope your darkest, dreariest cell.  
England will bless you on your altered way  
"Cease to do evil—learn to do well!"

So, my dear Nick, the big house of Greenlands found itself sagging like the rest of them, and as it sagged there sagged with it its staff of servants, those half-feudal retainers so utterly removed from the house-parlourmaid or cook-general of Mrs. Patronage, Provincial Bank House, Skeheenarinka.

Gradually the whole burden of the place devolved on Ralph's shoulders. He had become land steward, major-domo, butler and footman. This last indignity rankled in Sabina's mind. There was a time, and not so long before, when it would have cost a life's friendship had anyone suggested to her that a footman should be received in her room. The uncomplaining nobility of the man released rills of sentiment in her. In Sabina, Ralph had "an Amaryllis for his arms ready-made, who neither needed to be wooed nor prayed," and if he had been like those gentlemen who sing to us over the radio about their hearts, he would have gone down on his two knees and thanked God, that such a woman as Sabina had interested herself in him. But the difficulty about Ralph was to discover his heart.

Once when I suggested to her that this seeming lack of emotion in him was nothing more than a natural shyness, the white horses were bubbling on the potatoes with her and no mistake. She just boiled over.

"What business has any man being shy with a woman?" she demanded to know. "We haven't

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got fins on us." I agreed, but I could not admit this to her.

"Just the same," I said, "there are a lot of men who have to be nursed. Take my word for it, Ralph knows how lucky he is. All he needs is a little more courage, and encouragement."

She sighed in her engaging way. "It has been a great comfort to me, Mr. Davidson," she said, "being able to talk to you like this. There's times when I think that Tormey—if it isn't irreverent to let my thoughts ramble about like that—ought to have his name put in one of those columns they have in the papers for the dead, and prayers asked for the repose of his mind. And there's other times when his queer drollery, the boom in his voice, the upholstery of him when he's in knee breeches, the whole big chassis of him leaves me that helpless with the sharpness of my feelings, that only for prayer I wouldn't be able to support the responsibility of the Glen on my shoulders."

I have to acquaint you, Nick, at this point, that throughout its later stages I was privy to Sabina's courtship, and had helped it on as well as I could. It was perhaps six months before this, when, so little did I then suspect the truth, that Tormey's name coming down, I had told Sabina that I thought he and Cicely Brannigan—first parlourmaid at the Glen—were "pulling a string" together. Ralph for all his shyness had always been a bit of a philanderer. Well, I might have taken the lid off a canister of microbes. I will never forget it. Down to her varicose veins Sabina stripped herself before me. Secure in her own



loyalty, she shed every vesture of tradition. A woman of character who is aroused and can use her tongue, still keeping her indignations under control, is a fine subject. One must not criticise too closely the bitterness of such occasions. Her words came slowly.

“When the likes of Brannigan,” she said, “supply the coals, it is easy for the devil to ply the bellows. I’m not blaming Tormey. He’s not any worse than the common generality of men. The gospel is no more than castor oil to nine-tenths of them. It goes through them about the same. But you can tell a man from his face. When you want to find a woman’s character it is different. You will find it writ on her extremities. It should come natural to me to know something of extremities, especially feet. I was reared on them. They’re a study, are feet. I never yet saw a woman with ignorant feet that belied their message. Brannigan, sir, is a one you wouldn’t make a drum out of her hide.”

Little Cecily Brannigan, I would like to tell you, so far as I had seen anything of her, seemed a real nice girl. It was only afterwards I noticed her feet and was able to appreciate what a deadly backhander Sabina had reached her out. For an interval while Sabina was arranging her thoughts, I could see little beads of moisture superimpose themselves upon her forehead, a message to me of the immense energy she had developed to maintain calm. “I would not take away Brannigan’s character before any gentleman,” she said, “if she had any left. I am not complaining either of modern freedoms. I could cry sometimes

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into the Tay river, beyond at Stradbally, when I think of my youth, 'Sabina, you mustn't do that; Sabina, you can't go there; Sabina, don't show your legs that way; Sabina, what is that trash you are reading? Sabina, don't cross your knees.' We were taught innocence as a trade until you hated the thing. I lived in a straight jacket until I married Raymond Humphreys. If a girl like Brannigan sees value in a swim-suit as a show-case, and thinks it may increase her market-value before she has too many nicks in her horn, I have nothing to say about it. But morals is different, and Brannigan's morals peel off her like the scales of scarlatina. Impertinence, when every house is full of impertinence, is the least of her lines.'

It is not my business to dip my pen into this quarrel. But what an unchanging world we occupy! Almost two thousand years ago did not Juvenal use almost identical words, to tell how every Roman house in his time was filled with the insolence of its domestics?

I made some soothing observation, but Sabina was still smouldering. "I have always said, Mr. Davidson, that when man or woman is the cause of their own troubles, they should bear them. The family had always favoured a butler, and when Alf left and went to England, it was I who persuaded Miss Joan to cut down expense. But it was really Lady Weather's recommendation of Brannigan that did it."

"Leather," I corrected. Sabina was stone-eyed. "I am unfortunate in names," she said. "I mean the lady whose husband has the corn-mills and barges on the river. Brannigan, Mr. Davidson, would take

the horn off a unicorn. But I'll take care that she takes nothing off Tormey except his smile. I'm mighty beholden to you for telling me. You don't happen to know anything about Brannigan, sir? " she said unexpectedly.

" Except to see her," I replied cautiously.

" If you breed out of a clydesdale you get a clydesdale. Not that I know anything about horses, thank God, except to see the gentry mounted on them. But horses was the occupation of Brannigan's father, if he was her father. A fellow you'd serve with a sponge to his soup. The whole breed of him on both sides were hostlers . . . grooms."

And though not usually quick in the uptake it flashed on me now what the pause between her last two words stood for. Tradition once more had her around the middle. I recalled the line of demarcation, now obliterated, which generations of tradition had drawn between the " house " and the " stables." Perhaps I was touched, too, by regret for that whole world which so irrevocably is passing.

Strangely enough it has been through this crumbling of the old order, of which Sabina had become a part, that her happiness finally descended on her. It was about a year later, all in the space of a week, when first Sir Fergus sent for her to come to his study, and with many genuine regrets explained how, with soaring taxation, and a whole country living beyond its resources, there was nothing left for him but to put the Glen into cold storage. Then before she had recovered from this blow, old

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Lady Mawley died suddenly, and within the month Greenlands was shuttered and deserted.

As you suspect, all that remains to tell is of a low, long cottage on a high perch over the sea, painted in the soft, lovely greys of quiet living, and surrounded with the most unforeseen, walled-in garden attached to it that you ever came across. An "all season garden" Sabina called it. The honest black of the soil must have been always in Ralph's nails. Everything that his hands touch is perfection. Even to see him bring the crown teeth of a cross-cut to a razor edge, or sharpen a scythe—two short strokes on the front of the blade and one behind—is sheer delight. He has turned out, too, to be a talker, not as good as Aristotle perhaps, though myself I call him the spagyric horticulturist, for he turns the chemistry of soils into a fairy tale. Shallots, Solomon's seal, sea-kale or Siberian crabs, to converse with him is to dispense for an interval with all drab and dull humours. Every outdoor thing, from the "catch of Timothy or young clover" that the farmer may expect the year, to the date when the first geese honk the news of their arrival, is a joy to him. He "upstages country life," as they say in America. A spade in his fist becomes a wand. As Sabina says, "Tormey could grow prize cauliflowers in window boxes."

First love ! and wedding bells. First love, *L'oiseleur* the bird catcher, the player on the magic flute coming out of the unknown, so often so uncertain a visitor to wedlock, so empyrean when he comes ! Is it wonder that each classical frustration of this divine *unitas*—Hero and Leander ; Heloise and Abelard ; Beatrice

## TRADITION, THE SPELLBINDER—II

and Dante; Evangeline and Gabriel; Sarah Drew and her John, John Hewitt; Isabella and Lorenzo; Sarah Curran and Robert Emmet—these and that differently memorable company, Agnes Sorrel, Louise de la Valliere, Amy Robsart, Highland Mary, Marie Walawska (who tells us that all her inspirations came from, and returned to her beloved), should for ever wear the rose of youth upon them, should have been taken into the “kingdom of the innermost” of men’s hearts. Only those who have mocked love’s voice are outcast. Even the Antonys and Cleopatras of the world, in so far as they have been touched by this white-winged Power, have a questing, saddened remembrance extended to them.

At her marriage to Raymond Humphreys Sabina had been swept off her feet by the notion of having a home of her own. But it was Ralph, from the time she first came to know him, who held all the entanglements of her heart. Marvellous thing, Nick, true love, the oldest of the traditions, though you pretend so valiantly not to believe in it. And the moral of this tale! Make this particular your tradition servant. It seems a good one. For even if it is natural that the high tide of youth should have come to be identified with the song in the heart of the young virgin, nevertheless permit me to say, that the mellow days are most frequently the true days of fulfilment.

“Mr. Davidson,” Sabina said to me the first time I went to see them after they were married, “this is what I call solid comfort. Like haft and blade, Tormey and me was made to fit into one another,” meaning that Ralph was the haft. “Even con-



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tradicting and arguing with him, how to get the better of the slugs, how to make the flues draw, or the windows stop rattling, I get a kind of suction all through me I'm that happy. And Tormey ! he'd do murder for me if it was required of him."

I draw your attention to that last remark. What does it mean if not that the marsh-light which she followed so steadily had led her to the one shrine where the human heart can fold its beating wings, utter belief in her of the beloved. With that treasure in her possession she had no need to bother ; save at her good pleasure, what I or anyone else might think of her affairs, or her. Marriage is the eldest, solemnest, joyfullest, most enduring of all the traditions. As woman pours her strength and courage and love into wedded life, she teaches man, when he proves worth the teaching, the dignity which dwells within the small concerns of existence.

And ascending to a more commanding plane, are not the wedding bells of a nation the pulse of its life ? Who shall pronounce on the sacredness of race, its preservation and perpetuation ? In the Orient there are priests within the law who wear veils before their faces, lest they should injure even a biting gnat. "That country is richest," says Ruskin, "which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings." For those who allow or stand by while the marriage rate of a nation melts—the murder of a people, not an individual—like Napoleon at Saint Helena, what spectres they must see in sleep, what dreams they must have !

The dignity inherent in the small concerns of

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existence ! And upon that note give me leave to  
conclude, with a piece from that pre-Augustan Roman  
whom you have always most admired, in my humble  
judgment the best of the many true and wise things  
which he has said : “ When a man turns from the  
study of abstractions and philosophy to plain human  
concerns, then every thought of his mind and all his  
words become noble.”

## THISTLEDOWN

"The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale,  
Sometime for three-foot stool mistaketh me;  
Then I slip from her bum, down topples she  
And then the whole quire hold their hips and loffe,  
And waxen in their mirth, and sneeze and swear,  
A merrier hour was never wasted there. . . .  
For never anything can be amiss  
When simpleness and duty tender it."

—Puck. *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

TO NICODEMUS DE BINCHY.

YES, I know Captain Stannard Wayne, also the hamlet near which he lives. Next time you are home I will take you over to see both. The latter I sometimes call Thistledown, the thing that blows before the whirlwind, because life is lived there by a people still so favoured as to believe, that in relation to Providence they are as the pappus of the thistledown.

You are quite right about Captain Stan, however you heard of him. He has helped tobacco learn its business. He has seen fortunes lavished to attain perfection in its cultivation. He has smoked it according to convention in every country under the sun. In the parlour of his dinky cottage he has hookahs brought from Basra and other exotic pipes from the most outlandish places. Let me repeat for you a tribute paid by him to this "weed of weeds" as it is sometimes called. "One time I was in Canton," he said to me, "I learned off by heart

## THISTLEDOWN

what the famous poet, Luwuh, said for the tea-plant. It is a thousand years ago since he lived. But what he said then for its foliage could not be bettered to-day in Tuscany for the leaf of the tobacco plant. Here it is. It creases like the leathern boot of a Tartar horseman. It curls like the dewlap of a mighty bullock. It unfolds like the mist rising out of a mountain valley. It gleams like a lake when the wind is blowing from the Southern Sea. It is fragrant as the brown earth newly swept by the rain."

You will like Captain Stannard. He can swear superbly, but not the oaths of the stale-juggling, shiver-my timbers, vaudeville sea-captain. You are in the company of a gentleman, with a little library behind him, which, so far as tobacco goes is almost Bodleian. He possesses the "Counterblast to Tobacco" of King James I, and still more curious, a seventeenth century imprint of the Bull of Innocent X, the one forbidding, under pain of mortal sin and excommunication, the smoking of pipes of tobacco (a practice that had become general) within the Basilica of St. Peter.

Let me present this vignette of him to you. Out at his place one Sunday, in the course of passing the time away until Margaret, fat as butter, his cook, had the dinner "ready," apropos of nothing I put him the question why he never smoked the cigarette.

"I have smoked the rolled leaf," he said, "as the Powhattán Indian and his squaw smoked it before the coming of the white skins. A good cigar is sweet as a windfall in the Doldrums. But a pipe is a man's smoke. It might be better for women too."

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I made the point that a pipe might not go so well with those *espiegleries* which women had always deemed so necessary to keep us from those dull thoughts of which they have never approved.

"Wait a minute," he said, rising and going into the house. Presently he returned with a history of the Court of Louis XIV, the page open at a woodcut, showing one of the daughters of that monarch smoking, apparently with relish, a pipe of almost Dutch dimensions. "Women," he said, "bore brainier bairns before they began to hang these gaspers out of their lips. It isn't any wonder to me—look at the ones calling themselves feminists—that so many women in this world regard marriage as an occupation for their spare time."

"Whatever their pre-occupations," I felt compelled to dissent, "they seem willing enough to drop them when they get a chance, in favour of what the Americans irreverently describe as the altar-cakewalk."

"Witty, smart people, the Americans, but when you come north of the Potomac their bows are too high out of the water for my taste."

I left that so. After all, that great people did not need me to explain them. "I have often wondered," I said, "how or where this vogue started."

"English. Time of Crimea."

"I'll tell you what, Davidson," he said after we had smoked in silence a minute, "tobacco rightly assimilated might convert this age into a grade-one world. Fugenics, not eugenics, is the religion I would preach. You won't find many crooks who are solid pipe smokers. You never saw a real smoker



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yet, who was a head-shaker, who sat loosely to common sense, who was a blatherer, an imitation for a man. You couldn't see him. Every influence over us of a pipe is wholesome. If nothing else it does the work of bo's'n on this full-rigger, the body, which it is our job to keep ship-shape. It pipes every organ to duty. Set me down for prejudice—if you call knowledge prejudice—but there isn't a radical humour in a bale of the stuff that goes into those paper whiffs. They serve one purpose, to keep the limousines of the "tobacco manufacturers," as they call themselves, rolling. In the public interest I would level every one of those whiff-vomiting mills. Give it a thought. The mentality of a monkey in the zoo would be lowered in your judgment, if you were to see him with one of these fag-ends in his mouth. Show me an addict to them and, man or woman, you show me one on whom I would not depend in any hazard of this life. Physically, a ton of them wouldn't stimulate the bowels of a dwarf."

What more is to be said, Nicodemus, except that they are pulling in short, these old sun-tanned, sail-raised babies, with their unassuming gift to reduce delight out of the decreasing years, as once they reduced sail in the increasing winds.

As to this little southern hamlet of Thistledown, it makes me feel the need for a fresh pot of ink. I know your recently acquired weakness for the north, but do not throw the north in my face. I have the right to claim Down as half my native county, the half I mean that lies north of Rathfriland, with its

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first and second Presbyterian churches nestling at either end of its little towns, Saintfield, Ballinahinch, Newtownards. When that completest Irishman who ever was, the late F. J. Biggar—no place or employment but he was fit for it—when he fired his “Four Shots at Down,” I pressed him to extend his range. “I could fire four shots at it myself,” I said, “the same as if I had been responsible for the planting of it.” But Ards of Down or Glens of Antrim or Escarps of loch Veagh—the noblest gable in Europe—what corbels and turret windows decorate this north country.

Glen Veagh with its feudal castle—formerly the home of that fierce and lonely condor, John George Adair—is a stone dovecot of the sublime; corries, ravines, crevasses, curling over one another like a wave on the break, a land in the everlasting possession of the open sky.

It was on the road from Carrigart to loch Veagh that I met the young poet of Knockletteragh, a tall, wind-swept lad. “Have you ever heard at all the new overture of Ireland?” he said to me. “I never heard it,” I said. “What is it like?” “This is it,” said he, as he threw his cap on the road and squared himself in front of me.

I was a clerk.

Geography, astronomy, arithmetic, philosophy,

Had gotten me in the belly.

Then, by the Grace of God,

As a western surf hits the shore, the pipes broke on me.

Music of the fair hills!

Stretching my ears I held them till it, for it seemed new,

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And yet it wasn't new,  
For often I had heard the catch of it pass  
—As the shadows pass along loch Veagh—  
Over my father's and my uncle's skirling.  
But, (what is memory only a leprechaun),  
It wasn't in me to put a name on it.  
On they came down the white road,  
Advancing like a foray through the glen.  
Who could they be at all?  
I stood pegged in my brogues.  
Then!  
As a sword flashes in sudden quarrel,  
As the column swung from gorse to gorse into my view,  
As the chanters rose clear now above the drones,  
O Turlough MacSweeney! there in front,  
With a hundred generations of the male blood of Ireland  
    behind him  
Was Red Hugh:  
And in the second, the name came to me,  
A sweet variant on the Mount of the Finnian Heroes,  
“The new message from the Yellow Ford.”  
Deceit, his eyes out, would be searching for himself this  
    day.  
I was whirling inside my brain,  
For the folk-tunes and verses of a people never lie.  
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The pipes were resting now: a regiment was in song.  
Is there another sound in which the heart rejoices  
Like soldiers marching to their blitheful voices?  
“Homes not empty houses for the Gaels,  
    Work with honour in their own sweet vales.”  
The sweep of them—Red Hugh with his cloak and  
    clasp twirling his spear—  
Was like a groundswell of the main.  
“They'll make for Cork,” I said, “as they had done  
    before,

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This time the cause of the people's won;  
'Tis the end of sterility and a gelded senate  
*Of Ireland a Nation*—that playboy's cheese without the  
rennet."

I am only a common lad, but I sensed it all.  
Come down, big fellows inyah! it meant,  
Come down out of the perches onto which you've hoist  
yourselves.

Ireland wasn't made to feed you honey,  
And give the combs to the bouchals.

Freedom!

Full-time work and pay for every child of the sireland.  
There'll be no " Three-C " camps in Ireland.

Freedom!

" For freedom the caged bird his sweetest song sings  
Against ' *Proputty's* ' cage beat humanity's wings! "  
Like the accents of love, like the bouquet of wine,  
Was the healing that spread from those voices divine.  
And then,

O Lord the suddenness of it!

My heart stopped dead in the middle of my ribs,  
For, as the pipes swelled once more, O'Donnell  
Giving a quick turn, wheeled for MacSweeney's fort  
beyond at Doe,

The pibroch faded.

—The music I suppose, was too sacred to leave the hills—  
Silence refilled the hollow of the sky.

But never would silence now re-fill the hollows of the  
land,

The pipes and voices must have been heard of thousands.

" Anxiety must not touch the rich or executive classes,  
Hard-tack has always been bedfellow of the masses."

Was this the gospel of the Mount, or Hell,

The creed of Francis or of Jezebel,

For which the sword was drawn, the brave were slain,

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For which the sacred fire was lighted of Belltaine?  
Hugh Roe had cast it in their faces—split in twain!  
“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”  
A pulpit that every man could get intil,  
This time Christianity embracing Cathleen ni Houlihan,  
Great verse and music.  
Wedlock for the poor made safe and sweet,  
Not the chaff of Freedom but its wheat.  
Ronceval from the silver spindle of his horn  
Never sounded such a sweet alarm.  
The New Overture of Ireland!  
Who was herald noble enough but O'Donnell of such  
tidings?

A vision!  
May the falsehood wither in your throat.  
Is the widow's curse a vacant oath?  
The end of archaeology and arithmetic for me,  
My curse on all exploiters of the Free!  
A land where truth's been frozen on the lip,  
Whose coat-of-arms is an Exile ship!

The sweat was in beads on his forehead. A great lad. Dear Nick, over my mantelshelf as you know, there hangs a painting by Alexander Williams of this Lake of the Birchen Trees. Well, it has come now to mean more to me than one of the most beautiful pieces of a great artist. It stands as the omen of a new reign of personal as well as social dignity, of all the habits and skills which destiny designed for this ancient people. I look at it and feel that pibroch tapping at my brain as it winds through the hills, Red Hugh with his cloak and clasp twirling his spear in front.



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Loch Veagh is of the same stuff as tulips, sheer beauty. But where you will, the flanks of Bunglass, the stags of Broadhaven, the twelve pins round Bengorr, what noble nails have been driven into the tent of Ireland! Yet, corresponding with a recent press invitation, illustrious artists from our Royal Hibernian Academy sang like the bass viol their deep sorrow, but were unable to name one beautiful village in Ireland! They knew Adare, but Adare they said was English. What did that English lawyer call our country, "Anomaly Island"? For famous artists, is it too severe to say that the response to that enterprising press-invitation was dishevelled? Even I, who am not an artist, could name a hundred, each in its different way as felicitous as "Our Village" of Miss Mitford. In a single corner of Decies alone I could have introduced them to one which is the lily of its valley—the "Great Fort," as its name goes in English—a village whose twin hamlets have the tranquillity of Orta on the Cusian lake; a clachan beneath its beech and fragrant pinewoods, that might be a wood-engraving out of the eighteenth century, which is in fact like a setting of onyx in the midst of peridots.

Do not allow yourself to believe I am painting an Alma Tadema picture. Almost any winter morning across the wide estuary outside—as the arc of the sun narrows—you may partake in a ceremony that does not need frankincense to lend it atmosphere. Then over the grey water behind the belted tower of Hook, rose and golden lights are flung into the sky, and onto the summits of its cloud-built hills,

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and for a few minutes the Godhead reveals to us a glimpse of our heirship, quickening in us thankfulness for life, and humble resolve to correspond with its nobility. From every aspect the loveliness of this village and its seven coves is perpetually answerable. Its cliffs are draped as the imperial seats were never draped in a Roman amphitheatre. Its diminutive Doric pharos and pier might be the toy pier and lighthouse of the water-palace of an Indian prince. If you possessed a billion dollars cash you could not add to its riches, for like its sands it is itself ribbed with the gold of its centuries. During a few weeks of summer its loveliness is trampled on ; but the weeks flit and the violation is forgotten. And Thistledown, not fifteen miles away as a bird flies, is of the same vascular tissue.

Thistledown, dear Nick, is a miniature of what this pleasant country was before it became a new Jerusalem for "foreign devils." Indeed, though there is nothing rank or ingrowing about it, I doubt if five of its fortunate inhabitants could tell you which end of a caddie to drive with. They draw their virtues from a different well. Yet though reserved, when a stranger's manners warrant its men-folk are not unwilling to hold converse. And by converse I mean talk to bring out freckles on the heart, the talk of men whose thought is sharpened by the file of reflection, who know to the second the degree from the vertical when their barley should be scythed ; who can tell you of the soil and its nature, of fish and their ways, of the sea and its moods.

Called by those reared there the " Road," built

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along the middle of a tongue of land, the waters on either side are a bivouac of the basking shark, a fellow with a ton of oil in his liver. The hamlet is also the headquarters of the great Dune carpet factory, carpets with a pile four inches deep to them, a place covering several hundred acres unduplicated possibly in the world, certainly in Europe. Then lobsters. I have heard you speak of the oysters of Arcachon. Well, the lobsters of this village are of the same royal lineage.

What more can I tell? The small noises of insects and birds have not the volume of a pride of lions. There is, of course, its tall castle on a high place with its partially intact curtain wall, its two southern bastions, and still undamaged beacon-turret. This fortalice must at one time have been of considerable strength, defended on two sides by the sea. Now occupied by a gracious family, it is a centre of ideally busy rural life. A couple of centuries ago there was built into it a spacious dwelling house of that period, plain exteriorly, but with finely proportioned interior, a place with many leisured memories for me.

It is a part, I suppose, of the inevitable consequence of empire-building, that our great castles everywhere should have become prowling places for those pallid, often dovering ancients we call archæologists; that everything whereto, now the commonplace, now the gallant life once lived within them should like themselves be in ruins. Witness Germany, how its fretted *schloss* energise each succeeding generation. From their dizzy heights the braided centuries of that achieving people spread out before you, blazoning the

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gospel of beauty, inspiring to sacrifice, to labour, to selfless patriotism for a fatherland so proudly graced.

The great burgher family of Whitty had, from beyond record, livery of this particular stronghold. It is said, but not established, that the ill-fated Earl of Essex rested here after his disastrous Munster campaign. He was certainly in the neighbourhood. If true, I do not think he brought much luck with him. Before his time, lying out of the track of wars, life had run smoothly in this great castle. What buckled shoes had tapped its polished floors! What squires and ladies had poured wine for themselves from jugs of beaten gold! The pageant of life, its work and play, passed through here. But after the flight of the earls, after Mountjoy had finished his Lieutenancy of the country, even this withdrawn place had to look to its barricades. By the time it became the strong nest of Sir Walter Whitty and his young wife, so continuous were the losses, exactions and uncertainties of the years, that this once accolade of knighthood found himself driven to courses—collecting tobies, holding to ransom, even occasional piracy under the lea of the islands without—which only the general degradation of honour could reconcile with his still extant, and complicated coat-of-arms.

After Sir Walter's day, despite the still thorny nature of the times, the fortunes of the house seem for a while to have revived. But—how often it happens—as the pedigree of the family kept getting longer, its rent-roll kept getting shorter, until at last one fine day tall castle and broad acres had to go. How castles went in those days, when they had no

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auctioneers, I cannot tell. But it went. There are still Whittys scattered along this coast, some of them finding it hard enough "to knock the-bit-and-the-sup out of the dozens." But such is the way. To-day, high up in the hunt, we are dining Sir Trevor Tichborne and that aloof authority on budgies, Lady Atta Boy. We are savouring, perhaps, the delicious fruits of slickness and wealth. Then to-morrow we are not so high up. Even his reverence, in Presbytery or Vicarage, drops a tear over us—"and the poor fellow had such a struggle to get up"—or as the circumstances may be. They say these Whittys, like most of the folks about—Colfers, Hores, Barrys, Godkins, Rossiters, Parles—were Flemings who came out here from Pembrokeshire with the Plantagenet barons. The pronunciation of the broad vowels is certainly distinctive.

But whether Flemings or not, there is a regularity of effort, a Flemish thrift and proportion stamped everywhere upon men and countryside. By indirection let me illustrate. Last Spring, stepping off the "Road" into the fields behind, I came upon one of my friends, Nicholas James Michael, a compactly-strong-bodied little ferret of a man, ploughing the strip from his house to the sea with three asses all of the one fresh colour. This hardiest of quadrupeds—even in Africa immune to the tsetse fly—is valued here the same as he was valued in Upper Galilee in the days of Tobias. Besides a horse in some of these wee fields would be like an elephant attached to a perambulator. When I sighted Nicholas James and his team they were resting by the headland. There are no field



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fences on this side of the hamlet. Making my way across to the team, I had little better than started when Nicholas James let one disconcertingly unforeseen yell out of him, "Gwan, you . . . Up out of that." And without sign to me, fitting into landscape and job, all the four of them set off light-heartedly on their bumpy way down the field. But mostly the men, half sailors and husbandmen, are tall, deep-chested, sombrely handsome.

Fertilised with drift-wrack, year after year the same fields are under cultivation, a sandy soil yielding a fair enough crop, but resolute to demand fatigue. Differently, just to the north and east, where there is a mixture of rich loam and sand, the five-year rotation may be studied—cereal from lea, root-crop, cereal, clover with meadow, and pasture—a district of strong farmers, men owning as many as forty Irish acres (the size of the Dutch farm) set around broad-eaved, two-storied, smiling dwellings, a countryside like Normandy, rich in orchards, gardens, granaries, spacious out-offices. You do not discover farmers with auto-cars in this prosperous district. Taxes do not fall so heavily here, because the intensive production of wealth relieves the burden of them, keeping their ratio down near the danger-point, twenty per cent. of total production.

To the naturalist the whole territory is of more than considerable interest. There is a wall of pure sand ten feet high, facing the long shore, held in position by its parapet the like of which you will not see again. Even if your sole summer pre-occupation be sea-bathing you may bathe from miles of golden strand

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with only the birds for company. There is no mass-production of legs. I accept legs. There is a particular impiety in the pretence that they are fables. They were made by the Lord God Jehovah. From the five-lobed nenuphar leaves which support them up to the torso, the balanced awareness of a good leg outlives any face. But the massed exhibition of legs without the discretion of clothes ! like those novels which are ninety-seven per cent. bare flesh to the page, it is a phantasmagoria. And the exhibition of unfortunate legs—raw, convex, fulvous, hirsute, spider-shanked, elephantine, fair-isle, without pasterns, legs violating every canon of Praxiteles, and not all young legs, legs old, calf-shrunken but still shameless, I ask you is there no session of Druids, no council of bards, no academy of tanists, no conclave of chairmen and half-chairmen, no symposium of old merry fellows, no way in which relief can be brought to the body of the people from such a malediction ?

I am not thinking now of legs, however essential they are to healthy exercise, and valuable in case of danger. My thoughts are of this village, where happiness involves only delicious concentration, where like Lamb in vacated Oxford you may "walk possessively," in whose fields at ploughing, sowing, and harvest time, you may see the bowed heads of men and women unconscious of you, conscious only of the message two thousand years old, which the little bell of the hamlet is sending out over this ancient land, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you !"

Yet the hamlet is not without modern gadgets.

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There is a public telephone inside a sort of sentry box in its post office. The " Road " is steam-rolled and tarred against dust ; while a big blue bus comes down twice a week to take us-folks—" rustics " the grandees call us, " locals " we call ourselves—to the nearest market town. I agree with you about buses. Living in the country, as between a private car and a bus, I always ride in a bus when I can. Twenty-five, thirty years ago (the bus had not then arrived) in the early days of motoring, when roads were not steam-rolled and tyres cost up to £44 a set of four, there was a sense of adventure in owning a car. In those days it was usual to have a uniformed chauffeur—you put him in dark green uniform with silver buttons if so minded—a man skilled against emergency ; and yet you always prepared to bivouac overnight among the hills. Horses turned at your approach and careered along the road in full flight in front of you. In remote places women knelt on the ground, and blessed themselves as you went by. When rain threatened there was the excitement of getting up the cane-framed hood, when it was willing to get up. If the weather were fine, you beheld your country up to where it joined the sky. There was the wind in your face. You were not glassed-in like museum specimens. If your engine were pulling a heavy load everybody got out and walked, easing her up the steeper gradients. There were exercise, health, delight, a certain aura attached to your ownership. Grave men took off their hats to the vehicle and its distinguished occupants. And yet, were these jolly days recoverable I am not sure that I would not

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now ride by bus. A bus salutes you in the chartered name of humanity. You are among the people, privileged to join in their talk, a part of your country and its affairs, the greatest privilege you can enjoy. "To be a man who holds himself aloof from the affairs of the people," said Pericles, "is to be one, not who is quiet, but who is useless." A bus disciplines the mind. There is a comfortable hum about its very engine. A sense of power is communicated, lifting you to a different level from the V-8 that you paid for at the price of all the generosities. You are a part of something greater than yourself, to which your humble contribution gives you the entry. Moving through the country you look out over it through glorious windows, from a vehicle in which you can stand up erect.

This village has its quota of those maids, who, Herzegovina or the Hebrides, have played with such merry jest for us on the keys of this mortal life. They do not assume the demure innocence of Greuze maidens. They possess it. Slender branches, black many of them as a crow's wing in the hair, they do not clamp it to their heads like a helmet. They have no kinship, these branches of young womanhood, with that brigade of little watchful-eyed city warblers who kiss their finger-tips to you with a gesture of the quintessence, who would have you believe there is not a dull moment in them. And when they marry, these village maidens, they will watch the faces of others—for their husbands' sake.

I must, however, warn you not to repeat these things. I do not want this place exposed before the

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wicked. Besides it is full of drawbacks. It offers no material for dashing off of brainy articles for the great rotary presses. If you were to tool a pair of matched black jennets, with pompoms at their ears, through the length of the "Road," if the very Minister of Agriculture himself were to drive his Agricultural Policy down it, I doubt if a single head would be turned to look after you or him. Then there is no Kursaal, there are no public gardens, no mechanical hares, though the local postman got £400 the other day for a greyhound. Even world-famed travellers—men who have been out in Palestine and the Pyrenees would find it dull. The sailormen never throw buckets of rum over one another. The edelweiss does not grow on its dunes. It has no humming birds either avian or human. The people salute you neither with arm nor clenched fist upraised. They merely tread in the light of the gospel, and what belongs to them is theirs.

My dear Nick, why do you want to know about this hamlet? Do you think of settling down in it? If so, should you not give yourself this hint? After spending so many years among the warm inventions and assemblies of men, could you now successfully surrender them? Even the leaves on the trees in a city look greener under its artificial light. I know your love for parts of the country, for the Decies and the pleasant old jingles that belong to it in particular.

O just to be in Decies when May draws down the year

To feel the heart leap lightly in Ardsallagh or Gaultier,  
When its orchards drip with blossoms

—Avian homes of minstrelsy—



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And its rocks and sand and shingle

Make a surplice for the sea.

O to sun myself in Decies by Drum or Helvick's side  
To hear its larks sing matins by the Suir or by the  
Bride.

To ramble through its woodlands, in its valleys, by its  
streams,

Round its holy well of Mothel and its Melleray of  
dreams.

To the sovereign his kingdom,

His sceptre and his crown,

My realm's—the heavens above it—

Where the Comeraghs look down.

But the question you have to ask yourself is, could you support life in a place where there is no worry about happiness? Nor will my prejudices help you. I am not going to shake out once more the threadbare controversy between town and country. I admit Dr. Johnson's dismissal of the country, "that a body is at rest in the place it is fit for." I acknowledge Sydney Smith's salute to perversity, "that the country is good, in fact the best for cattle." I concede the glare of publicity that beats on village life. On the other hand, it is the one place where you have no imaginary ancestors to support; where you can spend as much of your fortune as you can afford on fellowship, where you are never called on to expend a farthing on your pretensions.

I would not live in the city of London, or for that matter in the city of Cork, if I were appointed Master of the Thames in one, or Clochasterarius—Master of all the Public and Publichouse clocks—in the other. A village is continually scoring a hundred not out.

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You can vanish without leaving a trace behind into the oblivion of its little society ; or you can acquire the confidence of its indigenous inhabitants, inhabitants who are all *intelligentsia* ; but *intelligentsia* who—though they suffer well-faring good-humouredly—never want to teach or welfare anything or anybody. Life in the country, dear friend—a chalice open, golden, wide—moves from day to day with just enough planted and tended, harvested and stored in barn. And when at last the sands in the hour-glass signal another of us, not much said. Bondsmen to an equal pride, it means only one more of us will be missing from behind the hearse, the need greater on those left—whether at the moment we happen to be on speaking terms or not—to draw closer.

All that remains then to tell you about this hamlet is its bridge. I rebut the charge sometimes made against country people of superstition. What does the word mean, anyway, if not “to stand over” ? And however you join experiment unto speculation, is not this universe filled with essences that even you—who can sing off the freight on 27,000 steel girders from San Francisco to Pernambuco—have to stand-over, but do not under-stand. You witness the daily triumph of light over darkness, but tell me, have you ever met any of the great doctors, who could tell you the least intelligible thing about the composition of the forces upon which that triumph depends for its diurnal fulfilment ?

Dear Nick, we have been striving now so long to get ahead of one another that our friendship is copper-riveted. Then because over there in that University of

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Thorn you have shaken hands with high opportunity, because you are paid a most handsome salary, philosophically and metaphysically to enjoy yourself, let me tell you I have known men as generously purfled, who went in terror lest a strange swarm of bees should settle on their premises, who did unintelligible things when they saw a magpie, who shivered like a jelly if they found their hat had been laid on the centre of a bed, who were a prey to all the miseries of circumference.

This bridge may be one of those historic causeways like the Bridge of Brogar, between Stenness and Harray in the Orkneys, which are known as "Irish" bridges, because they go *under* the water instead of over it. Called St. Patrick's Bridge, the three miles of it were built by the national apostle in one *night*. At low tide you can still travel along it for the best part of a mile, when it submerges to complete its clearly marked course to the lesser of the two islands in the bay. There is no knowledge when this submergence occurred. As with the Bridge of Brogar, the entire structure is covered at high tide. Where it joins the shore it measures some 140 feet across. So far, the archæologists have fortunately been kept away from it. But do you think a small company of oceanologists would be of any assistance in elucidating its mystery?

Now give me your rapt attention. The shore upon which this bridge abuts is subject to coast erosion. As the land recedes the bridge follows it. But what I want to warn you is, should you decide to build a villa in this hamlet do not remove any stones from this

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bridge. Recently the County Council, ignoring tradition, had stones removed from it for steam-rolling the nearest main road. Whenever possible I avoid using that road. A few years ago a neighbouring farmer and his sons came down to this bridge with their carts, loading them with stones. . . . But perhaps a less tragic remembrance might be preferable. It would be about thirty years now, I believe, since the east pier showed signs of weakening. This island was then exclusively governed from Westminster. Thoughtlessness may have been responsible. Just no quarry was convenient, and the bridge being handy, stones were directed to be drawn from it. Well, at every point where the pier was so strengthened it fell to pieces.

I want to make myself quite clear. I do not ask you to believe these things. Why should I want anyone to believe anything? The only persons whose agreement is vital to me are my publisher and physician, and of course my butcher, tailor and grocer, and I am assured of the pleasant accord of the latter so long as I pay my accounts with reasonable regularity. To help everybody, the neighbour as well as I can, is the only obligation I recognise. "I just eat when I have a stomach . . . sleep when I am drowsy . . . laugh when I am merry," and claw no man in his humour—unless under great provocation.

The business of this bridge is like the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, patron saint of Naples. Your acceptance or rejection of that miracle, dear friend, does not alter the fact.

## ON STYLE

"I understand you, Sir, 'tis well begged."

—*Twelfth Night. Act iii.*

"IF you propose to write, and have anything you feel ought to be said," says Gustave Flaubert, "there is only one noun to say it in, one verb to give it life, one adjective to qualify it," in brief—Style. And in the pursuit of style, of these dynamic nouns, adjectives and verbs, Milton, we are told, combed literature as Kipling—a star of minor brilliance—combed it for the unusual. Typically the quest of Stevenson was for the happy word, as the quarry of Tennyson was the exquisite, each one in search of what his nature prompted, each animated by a single thought, the expression of his inward self, for by style is to be understood not merely the faultless harnessing of beautiful words to original thought, but character. Permit me to amplify the use of this word, character, in this connection. Here it signifies the sum of the flotsam cast upon the shore of a man's life, when that life, not folly-fallen, has been shaped, in part at least, *in dem strom der weit*—Schiller's words. I do not mean that style is enhanced by tumult. There may even be conflict without tumult. Should you perchance be acquainted with Howlett's little piece, "The Cricket Match," you will understand better the multiplicity of which these words, tumult and



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conflict, are susceptible. Reading is unquestionably one of the chief aids to the cultivation of good writing. But not all the great masters are easy to read. Hell might have brooded over some of the pages of Robert Browning, and yet may not the obscurity, or a part of the obscurity be within ourselves, a fact useful to bear in mind when tempted to dismiss writing as difficult.

Ernest Shackleton tells us that until he married the charming lady who is now his widow, Browning had been an enigma to him. We have also the poet's own assurance that he never tried to puzzle people. "On the other hand," he says, "I never pretended to offer literature as a substitute for a cigar, or game of dominoes for an idle man." And there is still another consideration that I would put before you. Even the great are not exempt from intermittent weariness of the flesh, and when a man is tired, whether by years or otherwise, abstrusiveness is so much easier. But the really illustrious are seldom obscure. I make limpidity then the hallmark of literature, and as illustrating what I mean by limpidity, pleasure may be afforded by the following different examples. My first example is taken from "My Life in a Russian Prison," by Vera Figner.

"A new life began, a life amidst deathly stillness, the stillness to which you listen and hear, a stillness which little by little penetrates into the pores of your body, into your reason, into your soul. How dreadful in its dumbness, how terrible in its chance interruptions, this deathly stillness. Gradually there steals from it to you the sense that mystery is

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about, everything becomes as puzzling as moonlight in the shadow of a forest. The real becomes vague, the imaginary real. Suddenly this soundlessness is riven. A gendarme, pulling the slide, had looked through the peephole. From that peephole the invisible wire of an electric battery stretches through the stillness to your body. A current has been discharged into you plunging needles into your hands and feet, convulsing your whole frame. And when the convulsion has passed, your foolish body still keeps trembling painfully."

The second is a nature piece, taken from "Selborne."

"In a district so diversified as this, so full of hollow vales and hanging woods, it is no wonder that echoes should abound. Many we have discovered that return the cry of a pack of dogs, the notes of a hunting horn, a tuneable ring of bells, or the melody of birds, very agreeably. All echoes have some one place to which they are returned stronger and more distinct than to any other, and that is always the place that lies at right angles with the object of percussion. Echo has been so amusing to the imagination that poets have personified her, and in their hands she has been the occasion of many a beautiful fiction, nor need the gravest be ashamed to appear taken with such a phenomenon."

My third excerpt, also a nature cameo, is from work that I watch being executed day by day by my wife, for "Land and Water."

"The sea does not hold any fairer inhabitant than the scallop, that creature which traverses its

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zigzag course through the great waters by opening and rapidly closing its ribbéd valves. Of many species, hunchback, queen, testa, variegated—so named from the variety of its markings and coloration—this last-named is perhaps of the most perfect symmetry. The shell of the scallop has been from immemorial time used to create now agreeable, now memorable effects, for it has been to the artistic eye what the living oyster is to the palate of the *gourmet*. In stormy weather this bivalve, the very playtoy of the sea, tossed in by one breaker only to be swept back into its depths and cataracts upon the next, you wonder how it is preserved. But seemingly so frail a miracle of design, its ribs or veins are so dexterously wrought as to render it almost as safe against harm as a badger in his earth."

You will observe that in each of these three pieces, the author has a message to deliver, a gift to you—a creditor—presented with the unaffected modesty of a debtor.

Complementally, here is a sentence to kindle in us humility, into which, without the advantages we so little deserved, we also might have stumbled: "A row of Scotch firs perched high on the very rim of the valley retained their evergreen conifers in spite of incessant opposition from the elements, but their ancient backs seem stooped by their evelasting struggle."

I have refrained, from fear of overloading, to give a specimen of limpidity in technical work, a piece taken from part of the testament of a kinsman, the late Wing-Commander Charles Mackay (*Journal of the United Services Institute*, vol. 67). Dealing with

Imperial Defence and the modern dependence of naval-power on aircraft for sea-power, it affords one of the most perfect examples of sharp-cut, cool, crystal diction with which I am familiar. One of its simple telling illustrations I must give: "Great Britain occupied for centuries a position analogous to Tyre of the Phœnicians. When by constructing a mole from the mainland Alexander deprived Tyre of its insularity, its end was come. Enemy aircraft are the modern mole of Alexander. Air menace has got adequately to be provided against." But in 1922, or even 1930 (vol. 75), the voice of a young Staff air-officer was the voice of one lost in the air.

I think fine judgment should inhibit mention of oneself in association with literature. It is not a question of whether we like or dislike a book. That is unimportant. Our ambition should be to testify to the elements that distinguish or disfigure it. Style, according to the later Chrysostom, is "the smoothness of Isocrates, the weight of Demosthenes, the dignity of Thucydides." Perhaps style in general may be described as ripe individuality, lit up by beautiful and appropriate words, arranged in clauses and sentences so that, now a summer brook, thought just purls along; now swollen with the tempests of life, its tension bursting bounds, it floods the soul, a form of elegance so contrived that you remain unconscious of its art. Put differently, style never makes the reader feel a clown among the sawdust. Instead it puts on him the tall hat and frock coat of the ring-master. His critical sense is stirred. "This," he murmurs to himself, "is a deeply recondite, sensitive

book. Its force, flexibility, fascination, hold you. And it is so eminently readable. You learn values without fatigue. The author was a great man (or if he happen to be still living) is a clever fellow.''

That is style, a balance sustained between mellowness and brilliance, between mystical-fervour and the cool brain, between peasant inhibitions and the grand manner, between twenty antitheses. Style then, you will see, needs to be busy as the three main fingers of a piper, while appearing idle as his little one. There are no doubt sumptuous books like the great opus of Charles M. Doughty, which prevail by the patrician aloofness of the language in which their unusual matter is couched, but these are outside the conventions. Probably Demetrius has never been matched in pronouncing lucidity the kernel of literature, meaning that what is said is so wedded to what is left unsaid that the union produces exaltation in the soul; the pomp of the transient office we fill, the orgulence of our escutcheon, the pretence that the Divine is subtle and difficult, every littleness falls from us. Life if only for the moment becomes a game of chivalry.

I would like to enter a caveat at this point. Fine language, used as an end, is the mere bombilation of a bumble bee. The pursuit of singular and magnificent words easily degenerates. The manna of Sir Thomas Browne derives differently. Yet to write plainly on a fine subject—of which I will have a word to say presently—is to set a jewel in wood. It is not easy to make out the bulk of a definition. But take this notion. Suppose literature to be com-



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posed of elements diverse and distinguished as the college of cardinals, then style is its cardinal-camerlingo, its chamberlain. Style has been called the eugenics of language, a definition which in this age of hygiene has alertness. A more feverish attempt describes it as the art of giving its major colour to each literary sauce. But—a natural weakness—I think I like my own definition best, style, however humble the lamp we carry in Jerusalem, that power over language which is to the spirit what the beanstalk was to Jack. And just for the pleasure of supposing, suppose that you could think with imagination, then, according to the higher criticism your work, borne on the wings of consummate approval, would speed down the fairway of letters among the really great books which do not pay, a reflection which brings me to the profession of criticism.

To-day, despite the coast to coast "hook-up" of life, when even criticism has to be mechanised, scrap-booked, card-indexed, there are still scores of critics who remain great artists. And what splendid fellows! That big book of yours, or perhaps that little book with the big margins, which was to have been a trumpet-blast—the critic knows what research, what tireless industry, what high purpose were put into it, what a dismal failure, financially and otherwise, it is bound to prove, sunk altogether in a few months, often in a few days. So he writes: "This is one of the few books in a season which one feels that time will prove. Writing from deep springs of esoteric thought, looking out on the vastness and beauty of this world, and the everlasting order of its

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march, the author, with that catholicity we have come to look for, introduces us to realms as lyrical as they are at times filled with the passion of life " . . . and so on and on.

How the words heal ! In the midst of an indifferent wheel-mad generation, how they infiltrate and soothe as this humanist intended them to soothe. And when he does slate, most often his purpose is, not indeed to get you read—that would be expecting too much—rather if he can to save your name from immediate oblivion.

Returning to Demetrius his limpidity, there is on the part of some a tendency almost to resent art—the striving of the engraver, the painter, the writer to reach the spirit of beauty—in the case of literature a tendency further developed by the confusion of limpidity with plainness. I read where a prelate not long ago would have us believe that plainness approached the Divine.

There is inexhaustible shimmering light imprisoned in the diamond. There is none in plain carbon. How poor a creature would be a tame lion. Even the lions of Carthage were not tamed by captivity. Melpomene, Clio, and their sisters were distinguished by their grace and beauty. Our imagining of them is like a strain of music. Plainsong itself is not plain. This advocacy of plainness, however it derive, borders on maleficence. And coming down to homelier things, why do we value the cabriole legs and exquisite scalloped centre of old Victorian chairs, one of the few memorable pieces which that period produced ? Is there no difference between Heppelwhite

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and kitchen furniture? A Puritan notion, before finally deciding on a career, I was privileged to serve my time to the goldsmith's craft. "Laddie," said my mother, as I looked from her wavy hair into eyes like the dawn, "when a trade is on your fingers, poverty never knocks at your back door. But you must own a higher allegiance. In Germany its young princes are made to work at a bench, carpentry or whatever, because when you have mastered a trade you belong to the freemen of this good earth." Well, style is to letters what his jewels are to the goldsmith. Style is inseparable from life. In the very bull-ring the matador is not dressed in silver, and the banderilleros in gold.

But need we go outside Nature? Who has ever seen the colouring and tracery of the aril, or mace, of a nutmeg-drupe fresh from the tree, and not possessed a treasure in his heart no time can dim? From the beginning of things, from the seminal spring of seeds, is not the lavish ordination of Nature not merely an inspiration, but a warning to us that we have not the gift to tell how it is that we are stirred; a warning, if we heed it, to take refuge in the Divine—*in omni ignoti confugere ad Deum*—exclaiming with the Musselman, "God is great." So it is with the gift of words. Even the commonest words when used in an uncommon way become messengers of pure joy. If I may join my undistinguished opinion to Lord Baldwin's, "The study of good words is more important than the study of economics." You will be well advised then not to undervalue all inflexures.

Your competence is different. That is for the gods

to determine. We are all in their hands. The pursuit of letters is like a tide-race, and with your permission I would coin a proverb from the association. A new proverb may be welcome nowadays. *It is in the incompetence of the helmsman, not the tide-race, that danger lurks.* But here is another pillow on which to lay your head, one over which, unless you are completely incompetent, no evil dreams may glide. If imagination and experience fail you, there is no shame in lifting your material out of old books, only you must mend over the material as the highlander mended his gun—giving it a new lock, stock and barrel. Then calm and unafraid you can look your ancestors and society in the face.

There is a book by M. Georges Duhamel, "In Defence of Letters," which I am most anxious to read, but which from a study of its reviews I can recommend as a companion of good writing. A review can be a dependable guide. One of the best reviews I ever had of one of my tiny books was from a reviewer who had never read it. He wrote with candour—he said in a private letter to me—from the reviews of it which he had read. And at this point, with your immense indulgence, I make two ultimate submissions. Resolve never to allow your pen to de-class a nation. Let blood, not dust, circulate through the veins of your scholarship. "Out of the strong comes forth sweetness." Above all beware of that death trap, "jackeenery." Plimplomplimps, Jack-in-the-box, is a maker of happiness. He is of the bright company of flowers of the field. But Plimplomplimps has no kinship with Jug-and-Bottle.

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Last, if you are writing *ad libidinem*, it is useful to recollect that everything which can be said for cats, Scotch rivers, the Dublin mountains, the English fen country, the buried cities of the Aztecs, about summer, winter, and the holiness of the heart's affections, has been said. No doubt St. Paul impressed his personality on the gospel. But this modern world is not likely to witness the coming of another Paul. Of course if you are possessed of first-hand knowledge—on Alaskan volcanoes, the pleurocarpous mosses, the appalling menace of large-scale peat extraction below sea-level in central Ireland, on infant negro development in the West Indies, or what radical oil is missing in the Jews to have perpetuated their diaspora—if you are possessed of such knowledge, and find that you are not equal to the more difficult task of reading, in other words, if you must write, let your headpiece and breastplate be those of the great Masters—modesty.

I have ventured thus far. Differently how daring it would be, were I to attempt to warn authors against the danger of excessive toothsome-ness, or tell them how to make words change position, incline, echelon outwards, advance in platoons; to stress the peril of misplacing emphasis—that should they believe Colonel Cognomen and the Secretary for Swamps are duffers, to say so simply—or to suggest, if they are distinguished married ladies, to be merciful in their massive morality, to remember that the flesh is weak and men frail, and that not everyone, like St. Elizabeth, can be related to God. These general



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observations will now have to stop. Only it is so difficult to stop !

Passing from the general to the particular, it has become the fashion to under-rate the novel. But the debt due by humanity to the creators of great imaginative literature is incapable of being repaid. Except playing-cards, as a device for the slaughter of time, the novel has never been rivalled.

The danger in epistolary literature is the temptation to pose. But when the natural voice of the writer sounds through, its charm is among the permanent things. By posing, I do not mean that each word must not be studied as your choice of the smallest gift to a valued friend is studied. Unhappily there is little meat either on the breast or the drumsticks of the bulk of the correspondence—the letters congratulatory, obligatory, transactionary, consolatory, perfunctory—which we write to one another. The begging or supplicatory letter is outside this purview. The love letter is in a category to itself. Some of the love letters preserved to us, clairvoyant of the soul, are among man's greatest treasures.

Last the essay. Can I attempt to define that which never has been defined? "The essay," says Mr. Ivor Brown, "is the product of intelligent ignorance, which I take to be one of the most precious of intellectual qualities." The virtue of the essay, I think, springs rather from the emotions, yet it is a product requiring head and heart to give it emergence. Serenity is its hydrogen and oxygen. You see, like the fox, it has a number of qualities .

Two things the essay should combine, seriousness

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of purpose and simplicity, but a seriousness which does not prohibit that dividing of the lips—when we smile—which is the nearest approach of the human face to the countenance of God. Elia's gaiety embalms it, but, if I may be so greatly presumptuous, with the tiniest degree less gambols. Touching simplicity, polish and simplicity are the oars, port and starboard, by which this little craft should be propelled. Tuscan propulsion it must have. You know the unforgettable glow that a polisher brings into dead wood, first how a steady radiance grows as his elbow moves; next, how this radiance gradually fixes your attention on the grain of the wood itself, until, imagination kindled, the mind travels from its lustrous grain to the fairness of the illustrious tree from which the piece was cut.

But the essay is also that water-jump of letters which has brought down so many gallant souls. Contrariwise, when mastery does come, a celestial ink flows from the pen. Some books of essays are among the fairest flowers that man has grown on his journey to the Praesidium. Even the dullest experience—fly-fishing, statesmen, hypochondriacs—may be transfigured under its radiance. Among the most memorable essays of Synesius—O happy Synesius! country gentleman, soldier, *arbiter elegantiarum*, bishop, when bishops were still like Ambrose chosen by popular election—is one in praise of baldness, for the essayist is free to be a haberdasher of subject. Please do not censure me for excess of testimony. Only I beseech you to believe, that genius is one per cent. inspiration, ninety-nine per cent. perspiration, and

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that men of genius have not excelled because they laboured in the essay. Like the bard of Carndonagh on his verses, they laboured in the essay to make it sing anew, and because labour in it is one of life's exalted, delicious experiences. Some essays, however, fail by reason of their very faultlessness. While some—the dialectician become essayist—perish for organic reasons, for the essay with its inherent beauty of line, composition, colour, will always remain what Montaigne made it, *a child of this bright earth*.

Many admirable works on style have been written by the moderns, but its canons as laid down thousands of years ago remain constant. Has your author, asks Longinus, the power to think greatly and feel deeply? Then if he possess the further gift, so to merge in the passion of his mind the images through which his message is delivered, beauty and truth coalesce, you are in the presence of genius. “To analyse style further,” says Aristotle, “to add that it must be agreeable or magnificent is redundant, for why should it have these qualities more than restraint, liberality, or other moral excellence. Yet style is made more agreeable by the judicious blending of ordinary and unusual words, by the cadence of its conventional divisions, by the persuasiveness that springs from appropriateness.”

And this skill in grafting the ordinary and unusual on the wild stock of language, this power at will of holding the judgment of men in suspense, while, period by period, thought is torn from the tape of words; this gift of uplifting the soul until—filled with joy and vaunting—the reader feels as though he

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had produced what he had read, what place does it occupy in the affairs of mankind? It illuminates every page of the Scriptures. It is the crucible in which the malice of men—I mean those predatory cats who would turn civilisation into their dairy—has been continuously burned away. Going to pieces only in the hands of the special pleader, down the ages Style has lifted and held Life beyond the power of evil to alter honour.

## EPITAPHALIA.

“ Let’s talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs.”

—*Richard II.*

OPENING the other day Old Hervey’s “ Meditations among the Tombs,” it set me enumerating the surprising number of men of letters who have dipped a sail beyond the horizon, who have sought exhilaration in the epitaph, from Ausonius, his “ Commemorialia et Epitaphia,” to Walter de la Mare his jolly little piece, “ Ding Dong Bell.”

Pleased with my conceit, it carried my thought onwards to those jovial gentlemen who operate our interments—“ morticians ” their modern title—who make so cosy and pleasant a livelihood out of the perquisites of Death. What is the secret of this contagious heartiness? It could not be all due to the effects of easy money, though it is surprising how money does affect both the spirits and the judgment. You remember Lar Treacy. Lar had buried four wives, and between bringing them in and putting them out, his peace of mind had become wholly entangled, whether in the long run he might not have lost money on them.

Death also releases that popular commodity, gossip. You ken Burns’ scathing epitaph on “ Holy Willie ” in a world filled with “ holy Bills and



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Willies '' And anyway why should jollity and light, buoyant hearts be amiss for these gentlemen? It is not they who are being put underground. And even if it were, what does the great *medicus religiosus* of the seventeenth century say? '' It is in the power of the weakest arm to take away life, it is not in the power of the strongest to deprive us of Death.'' Of course we cannot all aspire to die in the odour of sanctity or on the field of honour. We cannot all bid good-bye with the same distinction to the merry comedy, the lucrative righteousness, and joyous humbug of this world. The heavenly stars differ in their glory. There are degrees in death as in everything else. Mr. Rutherford Rudd, the handsome, popular and so debonair auctioneer, announces with well-conceived embroidery the impending sale at Castle Marsh in the County of Swamp, of the '' historic period furniture '' of the Hon. Rubert Iris. Then with just the perfect differentiation he draws attention to the disposal at North Abbey, of the '' highly important '' furniture of Colonel North ; of the sale at Medicine Hat Villa of the interesting *recherché* furniture of the late Dr. Winslow ; and at Golders Green, Templeogue, of the '' furniture '' and outdoor effects of Sean Henneberry, retired fish and poultry dealer. (What exactly is the difference between a dealer and a merchant I have never rightly understood).

Herrick perhaps, in the bonniest of epitaphs, came nearest to how our rue should, in general, be worn. But then Herrick disfigured so little with his pen.

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In this little urn is laid  
Prudence Baldwin, once my maid;  
From whose happy spark here let  
Spring the purple violet.

In "Ned Dunn," too, there is an exquisitely-faint  
perfumed appreciation of the happiness of melancholy.

Where be Sean Bond now?  
Dead as King Solomon.  
Where Tom French I knew?  
Gone, my friend, gone.  
Where is Mick the pugilist?  
Dead calm—due east and west.  
Dinny, Tadg and Jack?  
Dust every one.  
Sure they'll no more come back?  
No, nor Ned Dunn.

It is not my intention to rowel you with bourgeois reflections, but do you ever feel inclined like John Stuart Mill (whom I have never read), to rebel, not against the funeral pageant of the great humanist, explorer or philanthropist, but the activities of District Inspector Grief when Death announces another "Front-carry" with its subdued hand-shakes, its umbrellas reversed, its vanload of names and titles in the next day's press, that lending out of the corporal works of mercy unto usury, turning even the soul's superannuation into social mountaineering?

The gospel surely does not tell us, that the angels lay down red carpets into the House of God for the rich and the workers to become rich—when they arrive there—because in this life they had filled His world with the dignity of Truth.

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There is a saying of the poor in rural Ireland, said with all the softness of age-old Gaelic resignation, "High Mass high money, low Mass low money." To repeat the sayings of the poor is permissible, for the poor have ingress into the Divine shadow. I remember receiving a letter of regret, that I had not attended the funeral of a kinsman at Kiltoom, in the County of Roscommon. There were, my correspondent wrote, "one hundred and twenty-eight motors and cars behind the hearse." If she had told me that there were just the undertaker's couple of vehicles with a few loyal friends grouped around—a funeral of the poor—I would have mourned my absence; though in the country there is some native homely quality which shades away these particular processions; a feeling that the majesty of Death—eloquent, just, mighty Death—remains. And yet, there is a finer timbre to human nature even in the purlieus of ease. Hearts as pure and fair may beat in Fitzwilliam Square, as in the lowlier air of the Coombe and Dolphin's Barn—sometimes.

It had been my practice for a long time to group together in my mind the epilogue and epitaph, in fact all accomplished reminiscences of the dead. This practice, however, especially of grouping the epilogue with the epitaph, was vigorously assailed on one occasion. I was over one sunny afternoon at an old Rectory—bearing one of those musical Gaelic names that even the American Indian has not been able to outdistance—a fine old house with lofty windows standing back from a lawn of widely-spaced trees. The parson, one of the best, with his feet still young

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in life, is endowed with a nose that somehow does not misbecome him, though I think a long nose is usually a drawback to a man. I do not know what lay behind his friendship for me, but I know one of the things that lay behind my friendship for him, that all his talk had a delicious tartness, matching the friendly mischief in his eyes. His wife, too, is a pleasant little woman. Living in the country, every contact stands out in one's mind. This afternoon we had drifted in some way into talk of graves, and from the talk of graves to elegies, epilogues and epitaphs. He would not allow the epitaph and epilogue to be bracketed together.

"There are no sunny nooks in the epilogue, Davidson, let me point out to you."

"Perhaps," I assented, "but is each not concerned with the preterite?"

"Forget it," he dismissed my point, lowering his under-lip, then pursing it out in that fascinating way of his. "There is a living spark within the epitaph. The epilogue is a lark, on a par with the panegyric, that unabashed performance of the man who speaks to the 'deceased brother,' with a weather-eye, when the time comes, on his own integrities. Perhaps I am romantic. The parts people play are usually all they are fitted for. But in a parish like this, where you have all nature for your teacher, where sea and soil live side by side, where the tilled fields stray down to the verge of the ocean, where hurry is put out of fashion, where belief in Prayer and the communion of the soul with God still holds its own, one gets to loathe humbug. So in its different way, for its unaffected

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truth and mellow wisdom, I love the epitaph just as I loathe the epilogue. But you won't discover the sort of epitaphs I love up in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. They're not inscribed on tombs like the great Earl of Cork."

Crossing to the fireplace and stretching his foot over the bar of the fender, he rapped his pipe against the heel of his shoe and drew out his tobacco pouch. "Of course 'twould be hard on the boys—on our great Jorrick—if there were no Epilogues, no Memoirs, or Further Memories. Whether any man may becomingly write a full-dress autobiography is another consideration. No admiral of the fleet cuts out and sews up his own uniform. My contention is that a gulf separates epilogue from epitaph. There is a closeness to the unspoiled human heart about the real epitaph, which makes it run into the affections."

"You don't agree then with Dr. Johnson," said I, for I was thoroughly enjoying the colloquy.

"Shoot it," he said. "Let me have the doctor in the left eyeball."

"It's only what he said in apology for the untruth of monumental inscriptions," I explained. "That in lapidary compositions one is not on oath."

He pursed his lower lip longer than usual I thought. "Davidson," he said, "I like you. I have always liked you. And because I like you, I'm going to give you a piece of solid advice. Form a resolution never to quote that old tribal barbarian. Johnson had a mind as wrinkled as a walnut. Boswell, the man who called our Colmcille *St. Columbus*, did a poor service to human nature, when, to perpetuate his own



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name, he dressed up the collection of old saws, buffoonery and bad manners, of that fustian Pantagruel. Bad manners, I regret to tell you, are not a speciality of the drivers of motor vehicles for hire."

In my astonishment I lost for a moment the thread of our argument. One accepted Johnson as he accepts the Good Book itself. On the other hand, I was not only in agreement about truth crowning the epitaph, I was prepared to go further. I would have the legend fixed over the entrance to every public edifice, "Speak nothing except good of the perpendicular man: *de mortuis nil nisi justum*, speak the truth only of the horizontal man." Suppose, a stupendous supposition! that our gravestones alone recorded the whole truth—glowing, white-hot, scorching the brain—what a world we might still make out of this earth! Gun-emplacements and that travesty of Christ, the Gas Mask, would perish, the Gospel become fluid. The soft word would be upon every lip. The peace of our graveyards might be endangered, but the fear of the epitaph would have achieved what the fear of the Lord was never able to accomplish.

Beneath this slab  
is deposited

Senator Donald Aloysius Raymond MacStiggins  
Pluralist, Twicer, and Poltroon.

Under this oblong of slate is buried what remains  
of Lucas Stanislaus Stonyhurst

The rankest personality that rose over the white  
ramparts of Ireland for a century.

His trumpet is also buried here.

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Or regard this tablet.

To the memory of "Black Norbury,"  
Possessor of a rum-quicken'd tongue, and  
Judge of the king's bench!  
With the mind of a woman who demands a soul  
And succumbs to a moustache,  
His life provided the perfect example  
Of everything a gentleman is not.

But as this millennium is still a distance removed, brevity in a gentle setting—sculpture appropriate to the architecture—gives most distinction to the epitaph. As Fuller puts it, "the plainest epitaphs are the best." Suppose for instance—now that these essays are nearing their close—I were to write an epitaph on how they seem to flow so smoothly (if they do so seem), and were to confess that they never flowed, that I had spent on them so many years and so many quarantines. But I have no intention of writing any such confession. Instead, like the Brotherhood of Jade Workers of Southern China, if I may so far presume, give me leave to present them as "a submission unto maturer discernments," with one claim only to merit of their own, the solicitude "to omit"; the care taken when grave interests are touched to record and speak the truth without umbrage, that gift for which as a people we were once distinguished. As to whether ten years and ten quarantines, or but one year and one quarantine, were spent on their fashioning, what does it matter? Was the first chapter of "Weir of Hermiston" not

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rewritten ten times? Have we not Kipling's admission—if you rate this provider of provocative verse an authority—that every line of his verse and prose was “mouthed until the tongue had made it smooth”? Have we not also the assurance that the *curiosa felicitas* of Quintus Horatius Flaccus was won at the price of hogsheads of the midnight oil? And to name one other, the Abbé Prevost. Did not this distinguished ecclesiastic devote twenty winters and summers to putting the finishing touches to his *Manon l'Escault*, though the world might have been just as well if he had never put any touches to the vicissitudes and infidelities of that young full-blooded strumpet.

What I want then is your assent to the appeal of brief things, the shortness of life, the widow's mite, the hunter's horn, its echo in the hills, an arabesque of Chaminade. Then to claim that it is this *elan*, if you give the subject a moment's reflection, which makes some epitaphs little carols in stone.

Beneath this stone, in hopes of Zion  
Doth lie the landlord of “The Lion,”  
His son keeps on the business still,  
Resigned unto the heavenly will.

Or this :

Elizabeth Thackaberry  
Died 9th May 1852  
“And there was a great calm.”

There is a tenon properly set in its socket, a note struck to cheer on the most sultry day. In one

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line the story of two lives, "The humble, and the proud of heart."

Or take this, on a different plane, to the memory of Father Allan McDonald, the great soggarth of Eriskay, who sleeps among those wild hills where he laboured in poverty, "*Celticarum rerum scientia et amore praeclarus*," just Ruskin's salute and farewell.

Or again returning to the metaphysics of our two first examples, consider this cameo :

Margaret Hawtree

Died 1874

She was an indulgent mother and best of wives,  
She brought into this world 3,000 lives

I do not think I have ever heard a midwife spoken of for years, that I have not thought of Margaret. Take one day out of your next holiday in England, to linger around a few of its closes, those little gardens of the dead so reverently tended, and you will be moved as one is moved by the memory over a space of years of a happy moment.

At my right hand lies my man Ted,  
As we did lie in bed.  
And so will lay till Christ do say,  
Come out ye dead.

"At my right hand lies my man Ted." Grant the little verse be doggerel, yet what life-giving doggerel ! No spluttering at the ode, no obelisk in blank verse, none of that juggling with syntax of which our hearts are weary. I remember, in the cemetery of a little church in Derbyshire, being brought up short before the tomb of an old soldier, William (Bill) Billings,

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died 1791, aged 112 years. Beneath me I knew he lay, with the mark on him of that soldier breed which never dies. "Roar, flames, madness," these they had in plenty, but few enough silver pieces in their pockets, life for ever playing so many scurvy tricks yet never losing for them its bright speed. What is there about war—before the chemist overwhelmed it—that it alone could stamp into the ground the base, over-arching this world with nobility. "It is well that war is so terrible," said General Lee at Fredericksburg, "or we should grow too fond of it."

I deducted 112 from 1791 and got 1679. Bill would have been too young to have shouldered a flint-lock with Corporal Trim. But what a vista the dates opened. Just twenty-three! in the first step-in of youth, when Marlborough opened that war of the Spanish succession which was to complete the foundations of the British empire. Ramillies, Malplaquet, Oudenarde, he would have been in the lot of them. If a soldier ever ran out of work in those days it was not John Churchill's fault. Probably Bill would have taken part, too, in the famous march on the Danube of the Grand Alliance.

"Old Bill" he would have become long before 1791, but young or old, master of the unexpected, what a single-handed job he had made out of staying alive. And now here, at the head of this romantic glen, with a soldier's modesty, he sums it all up for us. When the bugle sounds for the last roll-call, slipping his ring-bayonet into place, he will be there without dross of talk, ready, if duty calls, to give that enemy with the horns-and-tail—whom the



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ancients called "Old Gooseberry"—the cold steel through his vitals. "Billeted by Death," his epitaph reads, "I quartered here remain. When the trumpet sounds, I'll rise and march again."

Occasionally inscriptions occur to induce a division of the lips. Let me plead for these divisions. They need no explanatory apparatus :

Here lies the body of  
Amy Robart  
Only *surviving* daughter of  
Silvester Robart

This mural tablet is erected to the memory of  
My Lord Stormount  
Drowned in the estuary of the Lagan  
By a few friends.

And crossing the Atlantic, an example from the New Deal in epitaphs is furnished in the headstone, erected over his wife, by a marble-cutter from Cincinnati. Giving first the date of the death of his spouse, the inscription reads : "This monument was erected by her husband as a tribute to her memory and a specimen of his work. Monuments of the same style 350 dollars."

But it is not my office to edit a chronicle of the Tombs. That task has been already discharged by Pettigrew, at one time of the University of Gottingen, and a lugubrious job he made of it. Where a grave and beautiful romance might have been written—opening with the imperishable Greek salute to Death at Thermopylae, and closing with the inscription on Flodden Field, "To the Brave of both Nations"—

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he has given us a book bye and barren. There is research. And in his stricture on "the representation of heathen gods and goddesses on our funeral monumental shrines," the erudite author threw a branch of bitter wood into bitter waters, sweetening them.

Poitiers is the epitaph of Charles Martel, the solar-system that of Copernicus. A little while back, the coming from England to Ireland of the ashes of George Moore provided the occasion for a singularly unusual epitaph, or epilogue, or—*oraison funèbre*—the concluding paragraph of which I am tempted to transcribe. For a particular reason the circumstance was lent a particular interest for me. The urn—from a model of the Bronze Age—arriving at the lake in Iar-Connacht, on the shore of which the home of the Moore family stands, it was received by a little group of friends. The day was soft and cloudless. The island niche in which the urn was to repose lay upon the further shore. Silently the three boat-loads of mourners pushed out, that containing the urn the last of the flotilla. Dr. O. St. John Gogarty writes :

"That day on that lake by me will never be forgotten, the oars that dipped in silence and the funerary urn held by Moore's sister in the stern of the heavy boat. We two were alone and we spoke but little, for it was a sad passage with the ashes of a man we loved between us, but as the ripples broke the lake's surface they laughed, danced, sparkled, and laughed again. They were like millions of invulnerable and immortal merry men rejoicing that a spirit as native and as impish as their own, the spirit of the last squire of Ireland, had mingled with them

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after a long sojourn on earth in his unparalleled life." I do not know what to think about that "last squire of Ireland," but then this agreeable Master of Caprice, who has so generously admitted us to his literary acquaintanceship, may have been only "Tumbling in the Hay." Curiously, in this piece, it is the mental gifts of his friend that are the balsam of his grief, whereas from a study of obituaries most people, it would seem, desire to subsist in the remembrance by virtue of their moral, not their intellectual qualities.

Dwelling for a long time in a sequestered part of this island, walking along the road one day I stepped across, as is my custom, to look over the wall into one of our old cemeteries. A man, Matt Tyler, his back to me, was partly down in a grave. It was a summer's day, that time of year when the oak leaves are as big as a spaniel's ears, with a gentle breeze blowing through all the sunny hours of it. I was not in a hurry anywhere, thank God. Very seldom the weeks ever run out on me. And, though as tough a circumstance as you could come up against, Matt, when disposed to talk, was a man worth talking to. There was salt to his porridge. Over sixty years, with his equator still undistended, with disconcertingly-rosy cheeks and a face watchfully expressionless, here was a man you said who, though he might be up to his chin in the Ten Commandments, did not believe that you decreased the supply of work by doing your job thoroughly.

The vigour with which he appeared to be digging was impressive. This thrill which we get out of seeing

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a new grave opened is disturbing. It seems not to sit on the neck of right ambition. We listen every Sunday to the vanity of life being declaimed against, to impressive admonitions about Death, and how, if our lives have been ordered as they should be ordered, it is no more than the falling of the flower that the fruit may come forth. Yet, layman or levite, priest, parson or plain person, the sight of a grave being opened always sends the same sense of gratitude surging through each of us—that it is some other body's fruiting time just now that is over.

I was right glad to discover Tyler here. He and I had always been good friends, in the sense that whenever he worked for me—fixing a ridge-tile on the roof, putting a new washer on the pump, whatever the job, long or short—we might have been young fellows together in the backwoods, when the hawks flew higher than they do now. If it were his last piece of huckleberry pie you felt he would share it with you. Then next day, were the job finished and I chanced to meet him, in response to my cheery greeting, like as not he would pass by with unsmiling lips or sign of recognition.

I shoved back the uncertain gate far enough to let me slip through, then paused to take in my surroundings. The desolation was indescribable.

In the marble orchards, the necropoleis of great cities there is a different unavoidable desolation, the penalty of multitude, part of the price that must be paid for the synthetic life.

The space within the whole enclosure might be an acre. They are dead, indeed, the dead that lie

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here. It is difficult to visualise them ever rising upon flashing wings. The nameless hog-backed mounds, the headstones sinking with their bones—plethoric vegetation their valance—the endless R.I.P.'s of vapid dismissal, old sour graves without epitaph or note anywhere of individual feeling to soften judgment-rods. The whole compound was like a doom. But what points of ignorance are these? We do not live by the dead. And outside was there not a highway running, a superb tourist motoring road, about which I would like to broadcast to America, a road reflecting imperishable lustre upon any country, the very dust of it laid with the finest foreign tar that the world produces?

Not in the wild foothills of the Appalachians had I seen a sadder hosting-place of Death. A few were held down under rude enormous slabs of stone. One new granite monument in its gracelessness hurt even more. Art is an unknown pilgrim in this wan place.

The annals of this acre are parochial. The dead who slumber here had made no commotion at either side of the grave. But was its desolation more complete than Clonmacnoise, that once intellectual bride of a notable pentarchy, nursery of Alcuin and how many others! now broken in the heart of it, its round towers neon-signs to catch the groats of outlanders, its only antiphon the lapping of the river's tideless waters. Clonmacnoise is familiar to me because a family—once upon a time wimpled in my heart—has a sepulchral neuk in a corner of it.

What complex underlies it all? If it be true that



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the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, then our practice concerning the lanterns through which those candles once glowed might set us a-wondering. Or is it all part of that larger station of decay, our pursuit of the easy road untrod by feet worth following.

The mean caparisoned in features bold.  
Self! Iambic posturing! and Gold!  
Pursued to the edge of the kirkyard mould.  
Art and craft in a brigand hold,  
A fox at large in the midnight fold.

Enoch O Gillian tells that the noblest of Clan Creidé, Clan Conail and Clan Colman sleep beneath this sod, that the sons of Cairbré repose here and the seven kings of Tara. Multitudinous odes, epodes, laments, idylls—struggling to express that “one bite of the peach of immortality is better than a whole basketful of apricots”—continue to be woven around the calm, imagined beauty of this ancient Christian foundation of the son of another carpenter, but they seldom express anything except the industry of their compilers. Clonmacnoise chills to the bone. Here the Aspen’s Golden Leaf Has Fallen. “There is not perhaps in Europe,” said Dr. Petrie, “a spot where the feeling heart would find more matter for melancholy reflection.”

All manner of men love this sweet country of Ireland and therefore I need crave no pardon for telling how its wealth lies undeveloped, how its “soul-windows” have been barred and shuttered, how here—a hosting place as I have seen it for goats—with a territory lying to either side of its vacant looping

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river, you are in a land dedicated to double-edged jesting with the Christ Child ; that Gaeltacht with its resources abandoned (to use a figure) to stripping the ivy from its dilapidated trees—to titivated industry and the exploitation of an ideologically nude, red-eyed Tripperism. Clonmacnoise chills, for in this terrain whose mountain spurs run together you are in the “back-premises” of imperial, flood-lit Ath’ Cliath, with its research into the intensity of the donkey’s shadow ; its banquets of Abíezer—Dionysius crowning Nero laureate—its triumph of the social spectacle over social order, its full-dress super-boxing stadium, its Royal Dublin Society to ensure the highest standard of living for horses and cattle, its International Gambling Casino, its whole Classical Ensemble and infelicitously-credentialled circle of half-plenipotentiaries.

“The straightest trees,” says a Chinese proverb, “are the first to be cut.” So it was in 1916. So it ever was in Ireland. Yet, appealing to some delicate sensibility in them to honour, suppose that the two hundred jovial occupants, of the Democratic-waggon in this island, could be influenced to hitch their gay chariot to the grave Apostolic fetters of the Supreme Pontificate,\* even now this still angel-flecked land might be rescued from its doom as the Tibet of Europe, an island of tubercular magnificence, Summer schools and beggary.

But in this royal place at least the flag of delicate

\* Though one occupant, with a width across the seat corresponding to his phrasal power over the English tongue, in effect dismisses the economics of the *Divini Redemptoris* as “flatulent flapdoodle, cod, bunk, hogwash.”

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sensibility is no longer lowered at sundown. It is never raised. For here, surrounded by "the world's greatest grass-growing country"—words taken from the epistle of Plunkett to the Erse—you are in the presence all around you of stratified negation.

There is an eastern tale. A visitor calling unexpectedly one day on a friend who had no tea in the house, a boy was sent out to *borrow* some, and meanwhile the boiler was lighted to heat the water. Time passed, and as no boy returned the wife continued to add more and more water to the boiler. . . . But I think I will tell you, instead, of the warning which the Keeper of the Green Exchequer Cloth of the "Three Small Kingdoms" gave to the improvident; how the only man-child of the wood-carver—who presumptuously had ambitioned to educate his children beyond his station in life—was sold into slavery, because he had no other possessions to pay the tax for the coloured lights required for the celebration of the king's birthday.

Am I uselessly trying to open a window in the direction of Jerusalem, or is that tale really one to which the Accusing Spirit could attach a red light for this comrellick-eened capital city of a hinterland, that should on its Dutch equivalent support in comfort 17,000,000 of people, but which in fact is politically and economically organised to maintain in easy affluence a bare 2,000,000? Or have the well-to-do of this city—that section of it who have no black in their nails—robed themselves in the laced waistcoat and bag-wig of the 600-page Majority Report of their Banking Commission; of that "International

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Banking'' which (taking two names at random) Major General Universal Asterisk and Senator Verbum Ultimum *et* Ultimum hold has been washed in the blood of the Lamb—if, sprung from the populace, they do so hold? Unfortunately for these Carmagnolas—if they are Carmagnolas—the late august Pontiff of the Roman Church held a different view. He has left it in no doubt that this international enclave of wealth is the offspring, in conjunction with the devil, of the harlot whom Revelation says sits upon the beast. And 200 jovial occupants of our democratic chariot! Have they also passed "the shut-eye" to the baronets (*quisquis illae sunt*), ranching rajahs, and financial prestidigitateurs of suspended production? Have they too definitely joined in the choice of Barabbas in this land of the beast, of tax-gatherers, and an outstandingly remarkable, contrasting Christianity?

But what folly possesseth me? What stony wilderness am I wandering around? You do not hear the echo of Haydn's timeless Symphony in D Minor, his *andante* movement, in the Guild or any Hall of this city. You cannot convince the woodlice in your cellar that the rest of your modern chateau is habitable. And what influence anyway do I—who could not influence the life of a spider—possess to lead anyone anywhere? Or what concern of mine are either king's palaces or green exchequer cloths; I whose favourite contemplation is the levitation (after He had told his disciples He would come again), the visible Ascension, majestic, serene, motionless, of the whole body of Christ into the stratosphere; and thence onward, as

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reason telleth us must have been His path, through the infinity to us ungraspable which we call the universe ; onward until He came to that unknown where is neither wakefulness as we understand it, nor that deep-sleep (that still greater infinity) which deprived of the light of faith, is the eastern orientation of paradise. It is all so full of distress, this tempestuously plundered land. No doubt regal power, vision, and impatience, can immunise evil, but these partake of the divine and plain people are not made thus brilliantly to live. Even the gift of impatience, except with my own remissness is so little understood by me, that most often I find it loathsome as a woman cursed with a plate-mail of rank. So it is for others to interpret the desolation of this place and its mocking capital. Let me hasten back—away from the derision and offence of it all—to my Swiss Family Robinson.\*

\* Before returning to my Swiss Family Robinson however, the curious might be bien glad were I to show them, how this city of Dublin has not changed much during the years, how it was aye an *airt* well-disposed for the arcane purposes of Mammon (the father by parthenogenesis of the Vested Interests), and let the deil fend for the unwanted crofters in their white-washed biggins throughout the land. Here is what the Dean of the Shamrock, in his *Last Conquest of Ireland*, had to say about this strangest of unreal cities: "After two years frightful famine—and when it was apparent that the next famine of 1847-48 would be even more desolating—it may be imagined that Dublin City would show some symptoms of such a national calamity. Singular to relate, that city had never before been so gay and luxurious, splendid equipages had never before so crowded its streets, its theatres and concert rooms had never been filled with such brilliant throngs. In truth it stifled the sight and sound of the misery that surrounded it, and which British laws meant should not be relieved. Any stranger arriving in those days (like visiting foreigners to-day, Continental, American, English), guided by judicious friends only through fashionable streets and squares, introduced only to proper circles, would have said that Dublin must be the prosperous capital of some wealthy and happy country."



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I went across the grass to the open grave. Tyler did not hear my approach. "Who's dead, Matt?" I asked him.

"You gave me a right start," he looked up at me reproachfully. I discovered now that he could not be more than four feet below the level of the sward. "I dunno what's to be done," he said. "I am standing here on the top of the last coffin." He had altogether ignored my question. I made a circuit of the open grave. If I had to leave without being told, I meant not to give him the satisfaction of repeating the question, and perhaps not answering me a second time. Suddenly he shot the spade over the earth that he had thrown up, and producing a pipe and match unconcernedly lit it. I had never seen him fail on a match. He could set the tobacco in his pipe alight in a fifty-mile gale.

"You'd think the ground was scarce with them," he said. "But tightness won't be anything new to Pike Morrissey, meanness was the inch-rule to take his measure. He starved even the fine farm he had."

"So it's poor Mr. Morrissey," I said. "I heard he was drinking pretty heavy."

"He didn't throw any of it behind his shoulder anyway," he rejoined.

"But they won't bury him in this grave surely?" I expressed anxiety.

There was no friendliness in Matt this morning. "It isn't a stick of celery to me where they bury him," he snapped. "I'm going home out of this. There's nothing more can be done. He's dead now, and it won't be ignorance'll hinder him if he doesn't

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reach heaven. When the goat goes to church he never stops until he gets into the front pew. All the same, it's no harm to say the Lord be merciful to him. He was generous enough with prayers himself that cost him nothing."

I was not in danger of falling into the error of the Stoics, for the whole business had induced in my nerves a sort of goose-flesh. "It should be compulsory," I said, "on the County Councils everywhere to look after the graveyards."

"Them!" he exclaimed, and at first I thought he meant the County Councils, infinite scorn in his voice. "Yards is a right name for them. The Protestants may be on the wrong bridle-path, but it's as good as a holiday to take a dander around their graves."

"I don't agree," I said, for I would not admit the thrust. "There's a friendliness about these old ancient burial places, like the feeling of comfort which clings to an old coat, to everything dilapidated."

The unexpected viewpoint bothered him, but he tried not to show it. Then entire master of himself, he stuck his chin down, wheeled about and hoofed it off sliding his feet along, leaving me standing beside the gulch.

He had not thought it worth his while to give me even a "*rividersi*." Yet my heart warmed to him. A few years and his life-story would be erased, as the life-stories will be erased of those who had so often condescendingly talked-down to him—when it suited him for a passing minute to dissemble interest in them.

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But is it always those who are most worthy that are put into the pantechnicon we call history? "Heaven knows, my son," said Henry IV, "by what bye-paths and indirect crooked ways I met this crown."

Gradually I think I have been able to piece together the main points-forward of Tyler's philosophy. I entirely disagree with those who call him an uncivil old dog. His incivility—if incivility it be—derives differently. It is the interpretation given by him to the regrettable truth, that to display more charm than the strict occasion calls for is to confess yourself a failure. A public character for three or four miles around the cottage and plot of land where he lives, I would have you regard him in this way. Whatever about the next world, no trumpet has, or ever will sound for him in this. Those scavengers of literature, those ghouls who prowl around the tombs of the dead, editing their remains, rifling old family histories—the very cuckold perversion of letters—will never bother him. He has never been selected to undrape monuments, to deliver orations, to cut tapes, to open doors. No "osophy" or "ology"—from archæology to zymology—has increased his girth. He has not been a choragus, chamberlain, doctor, knight, postulator or president of anything. He has no fictitious personality. He has found full entertainment in being Tyler. And on Athenian authority this is the nearest we may approach serenity.

And for epitaph! Endowed with a spark of that genius which makes it a crime to do less than one's best, born in the eye of the sea, half a sailor himself, when the time comes for him "to coil up his ropes,"

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I am not sure that he would give "a stick of celery," much less a griddle of bread, for any epitaph in ink or stone, or even "triple brass."

If we cannot define happiness, perhaps it is possible to assemble those things in which it dwells. Always to remember that a noble man speaketh a noble language; always undetected to make little capitulations; always to keep augmenting our tiny store of beautiful things—another lustre jug for the dresser, another book for the shelf, another rose-bush for the flower-plot—always to have a care that the scale of our outgoings swings lighter than that of our incomings; always to give battle to difficulty; always to love God for His gift to us of life, in these are liberty of the spirit, the *Indweller* with felicity.

Tyler may not have fashioned the keys which he possessed to happiness on this precise pattern, but a locksmith of no mean attainment he possessed many keys to it. I use the plural form. Even to the kingdom of heaven there are *keys*, not one key only. And, although he might not be concerned about his epitaph, yet cherishing good words, if he did have motto to hand on, enriched by the twist of his tongue, it would embody the principle that has animated all his actions, which underlies all nobility: "Soldier of life stand firm. Stand firm in your rank until . . . 'Fall out!'"

[END]





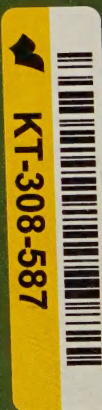


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